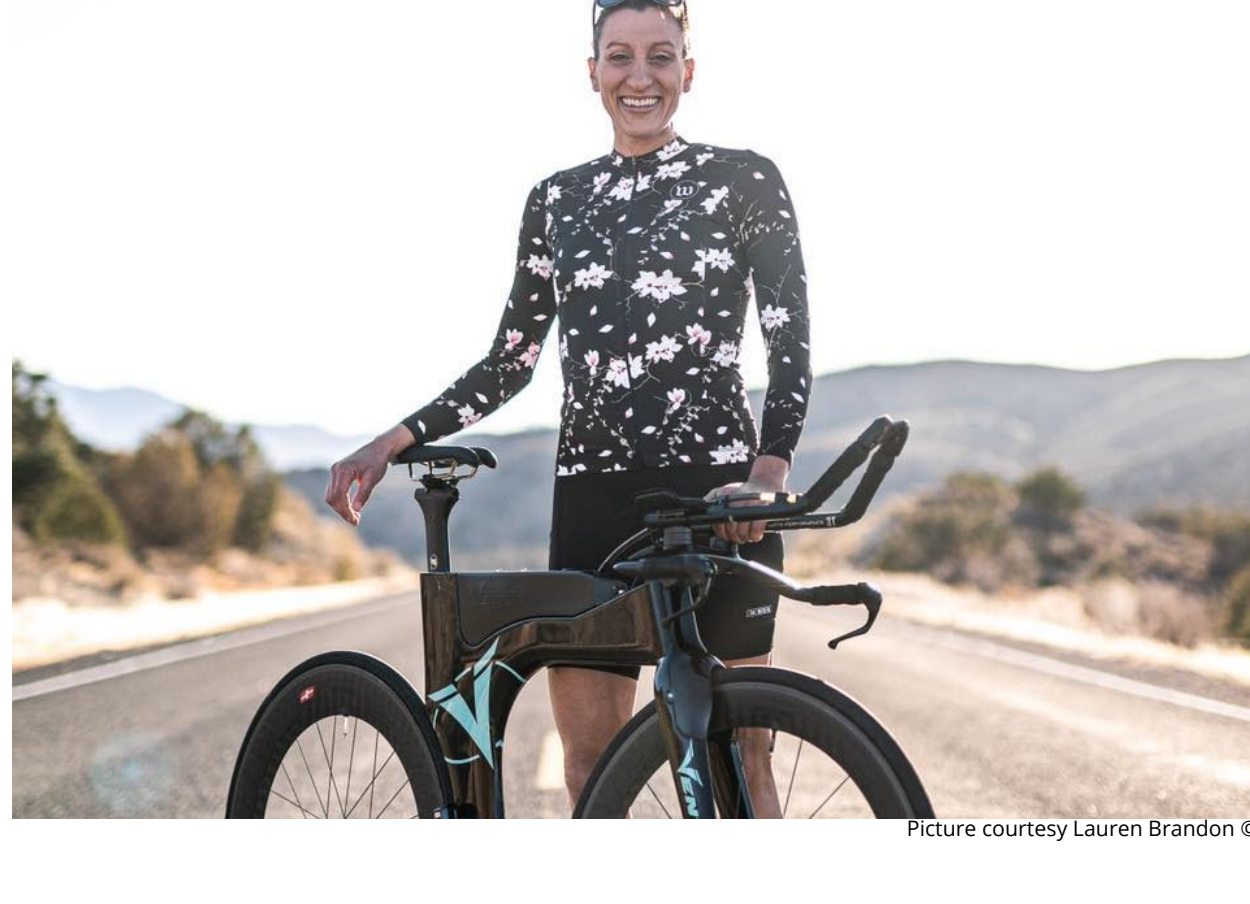


Lauren Brandon - Professional Triathlete

A Triathletes of Utah Interview



Picture courtesy Lauren Brandon ©

Professional Triathlete Lauren Brandon moved to Utah in 2019, and has been making a splash in our state. She took time to talk with us and let us get to know her better.

Lauren, we appreciate you taking some time to chat with us. Will you start out by telling us a little bit about yourself? Where you grew up, school, things you liked to do as a kid.

Thanks so much for wanting to get to know more about me... I was born in Connecticut and moved to California when I was 4. By the time I was 5 year old, I was already swimming on a year around team and was committed to the sport at a very young age. Swimming came very naturally to me and I really enjoyed it. I dabbled in a couple of other sports for a short period of time growing up, basketball and synchronized swimming, but swimming was always my focus.

When I wasn't in school or swimming, I was spending time with friends and family. I ended up getting a full athletic scholarship to the University of Nebraska and had a great career there. I won a few individual Big 12 titles, went to NCAA's all 4 years, and finished my swim career at the 2008 Olympic Trials. I also received a post-graduate scholarship, so I went back to California where I received my Master's Degree in Early Childhood Special Education. Life then took me to Texas where I got married (I have been with my husband since my Freshman year of college), I coached swimming, and became a professional triathlete. Now here we are :)

What pulled you towards or into the sport of triathlon?

When I met my husband in college, he had just become a professional triathlete. I started following the sport and knew that once I was done with my swim career that I would give triathlon a go. We met in 2003 and it wasn't until 2009 that I finally got to race my first triathlon.

You started racing in 2009, can you tell us a bit about your professional career so far?

My first triathlon was Pacific Grove in 2009. I had only ridden a bike outside a few times and was so incredibly nervous. I remember that I couldn't even take my hand off of the handle bars to grab my bottle of water. I did have a ton of fun and ended up doing quite well despite my cycling difficulties. I decided that I would give myself one year to try and get my pro card, so I did 4 races in 2010, and qualified for my professional license.

As you can imagine, I was still very new to the sport and probably had no business racing in the pro field at that time, but that's what I wanted to do. The original plan was to go the Olympic ITU route because of my strong swim background, but my running wasn't fast enough and I didn't like biking near people, so I began racing non-draft Olympic distance races. I continued to do some ITU racing, hoping that I would get better and be able to have a go in the Olympics, but that never happened. Long course certainly suits me a lot better than the shorter racing, just like in swimming where I was a distance swimmer.

During 2011-2015 there was the Lifetime and HyVee series, which allowed me to do a lot of non-draft Olympic distance races, make some money, develop a lot of friendships in the sport, and gain a lot of experience in triathlon. As those series were coming to an end, I felt like it was time to go longer. I did quite a few 70.3 races in 2015 (?) and then all of a sudden got really excited about doing a full Ironman race. It has been many years of doing full distance races and I am still loving it and continuing to get stronger and faster. I got my first Ironman win at Boulder in 2019 and look forward to my best years in the sport still ahead of me.



Picture courtesy Lauren Brandon

Do you have a triathlon legend or mentor that you've looked up to?

When I first started out in the sport I raced Laura Bennett and Becky Lavelle a lot. They were so welcoming and kind to me and I will never forget all of the wonderful advice that they gave to me. They were both collegiate swimmers, so I felt like they understood how hard the transition could be (although I think it was quite a slower transition for me than them :)

You were an ALL AMERICAN swimmer in college, would you say swimming is your favorite discipline or have you learned to love the bike and run?

People always assume that since I was a really good swimmer, that it is my favorite of the three disciplines. Since I have spent a lot of hours in the pool over the past 30 years, I actually prefer biking and running over staring at the black line. I would say my favorite workouts are either a relaxed run on the trails or a hard interval bike session on the trainer. Yes, I love riding my bike inside on the trainer. Haha.

You moved to Park City in 2019, what brought you to the state?

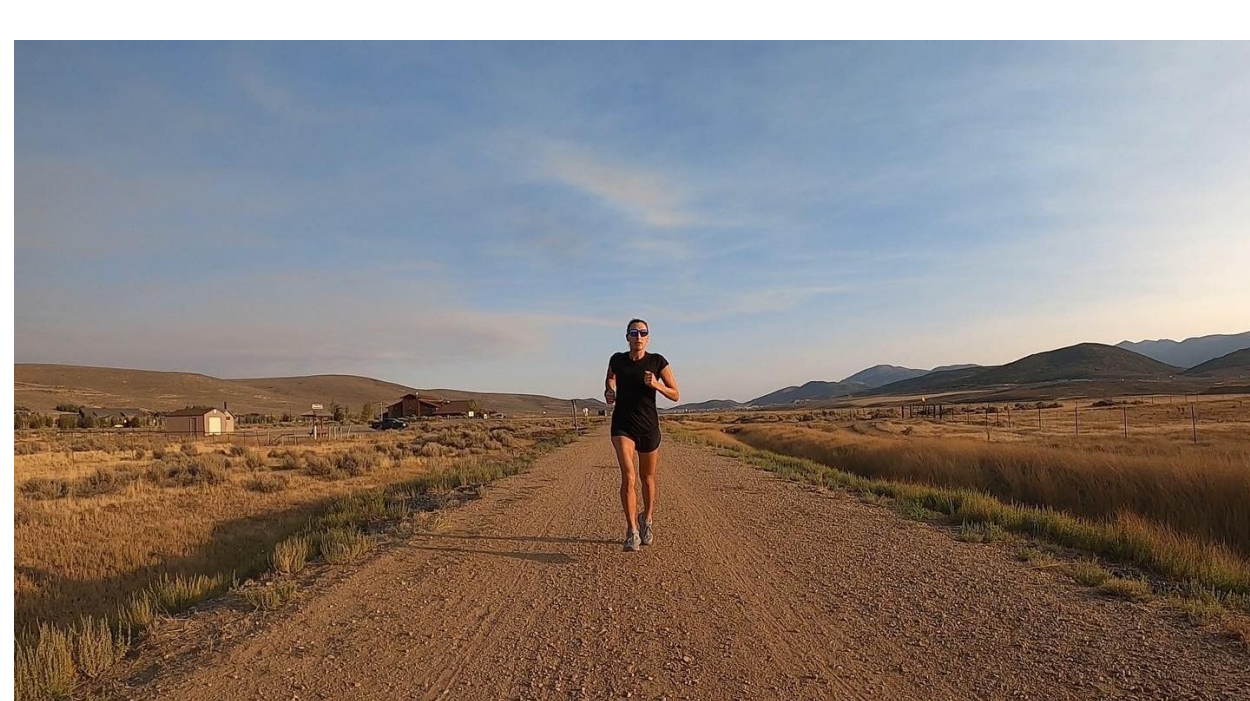
My husband got a job with [Ventum bikes](#) who had just relocated to Heber Valley, so we packed up our stuff, and drove out here without me ever having been to Utah. We are absolutely loving living here and we were both incredibly excited for the opportunity with Ventum as well as the move to the mountains.

What is your favorite thing about Utah and living here?

I love that there are so many things to do outdoors here in Utah. The mountains are absolutely beautiful, but you can also drive a few hours away and enjoy all that Moab or St George have to offer. Most people seem to have moved here because they love being active and spending time outdoors. I feel like we fit in well.

Will you cue us in on some of your favorite areas to swim, bike and run?

I swim at Silver Mountain Athletic Club, which has a beautiful outdoor pool. There is also Jordanelle Lake and Deer Creek close by if you want open water swim options (or pretty places to take pictures :) My favorite long ride during the summer is heading out on Brown's Canyon, going up Wolf Creek pass, stopping for drinks and snacks in Hanna, and then coming home. It's an amazing ride with a ton of climbing, but nothing too steep, so I love it. For running, I enjoy going on the Rail Trail heading away from town, or one of the steep trails off of the Rail Trail near town (my mind is blanking on the name of my favorite one).



Picture courtesy Lauren Brandon

You have a number of wins and podium spots in the 70.3 distance. Will you be racing IRONMAN St George 70.3 in May and/or the World Championship in September?

I am planning on racing 70.3 St George in May and 70.3 Worlds in September. I still have to qualify for Worlds, so hopefully I can do that at the race in May! I could not be more excited about Utah hosting this year! The triathlon community in Utah and I know we will put on a great event!

What is something you like to indulge in, food wise, after a hard workout or race?

I typically don't feel like eating much right after a race, but the day after an Ironman, I am always up for a good burger and fries.

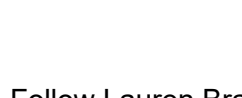
What is your favorite thing to do or hobby outside of triathlon?

When I'm not training, I just enjoy relaxing at home with the hubby or spending time with our friends. I have also been enjoying trying out new (easy) recipes so that we don't eat the same thing all of the time, which has been fun.

Thank you again Lauren for giving us some insight on yourself. We hope to see you crush some races this year!

Thanks.

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