

## STC Transition Talk with Sarah Harrison

*Sarah first moved to Sheffield over 25 years ago for University and for the rock climbing. Now she spends her time climbing up onto the podium in the STC colours.*

**STC:** Welcome Sarah, thank you for joining us and allowing us the opportunity to learn a bit about you. Firstly, what was it about Sheffield that made you want to stay after your degree?

**Sarah:** Well I was completely hooked on climbing by the end of my degree, and the Sheffield scene was the place to be. I managed to stay for a few years before I moved slightly further north for a PhD... and more world-class climbing 😊;-)

**STC:** At that time did you ever think you'd take up triathlon, let alone be successful at it?

**Sarah:** No, it was all about the climbing. That said, I ran and swam sporadically, in a very low-key way. Triathlon must've occurred to me somewhere along the way, because I remember taking a day intro course to triathlon, in 2009 maybe. It took me a few more years to do anything about it though.

**STC:** It was a slow burner, but now the fire of triathlon burns bright. How long you've been a member of the club for and what it has been like for you?

**Sarah:** I've member of STC for 5 years now. The joint knowledge of the club was a huge support to begin with when, like most novices, I had no idea what people wore (shockingly little) or why I struggled to handle my bike (it was too big). Nowadays I particularly appreciate the camaraderie of seeing other club members out training or at races.

**STC:** Tell us about how your past season went?

**Sarah:** It has been a good season with my running getting stronger leading to stronger racing. My highlight of the season was going (comfortably) under 3 hours at the Slateman. It's the race that inspired me to take up triathlon and I still love it.

It was also pretty cool to pull a pb out of the bag at Vitruvian; that was all down to experience and positive thinking, as my training hadn't been the best through the Summer and I've felt weaker on the bike this year – possibly related to a significant head injury last Christmas. I haven't forgotten that I'm lucky to have been racing at all this year

**STC:** Last year you posted a photo of a Burger King Meal after placing 1st in your age group at the English Nationals at Ripon- something you said you'd never had before. For some the harder they train the less they think about the food they eat (I'm not sure that's true at all!). How does nutrition work with your training?

**Sarah:** Haha, yes.... desperate times call for desperate measures. I didn't think I was going to make it home when my stomach kicked in again after that race. I don't do food fads or denying myself food I really want. I enjoy food - as we all should! - and I'm certainly not the food police. However, I choose to buy & cook with organic, sustainable produce. I believe that the effects of pesticides, hormones etc. in our food isn't well-enough understood, particularly for young children who will potentially be ingesting these things for 100 years. I also genuinely believe that it's the way forward, environmentally. I started buying from Riverford 5 years ago after becoming jaded with supermarket organic produce, in particular the lack of flavour.



In terms of nutrition advice for triathlon, I don't think I have anything to say that hasn't been said before. However, I really recommend a book called 'Roar', by Stacey Sims, as a one-stop-shop for advice including nutrition, specific to women training & competing at all levels.

**STC: You make a great case; people should take a look at what they put into their bodies. Now you don't just have yourself to feed, you also have a 5-year-old to look after. How do you successfully juggle both being a single working mum and a triathlete?**

**Sarah:** I am immensely grateful to friends and family, mostly my parents, who make it possible for me to race. In terms of the week-to-week stuff though, that's down to me. My advice would be to get a turbo and learn how to use it. Seriously though, there's no easy answer to fitting training in when you're time-poor; the lengths I go to fit in a 30 min run or a swim in to the day would make a good comedy, I think. Firstly, don't think you have to do a lot in order to improve and don't be intimidated by rumors of other people's training schedules. Do whatever you can to keep at it consistently though. Secondly, for me, it's critical that I'm flexible with my training. My free time changes every week, often without notice: The best use of my time doesn't depend on whether it's 'swim night' or 'track night' but on what other training I am able to fit into the days before & after and on how I judge I'm feeling. Of course, this approach only works if you're ok with training on your own.

**STC: Thank you, it is important that your training schedule fits in with your life and what works for you. Wise words from someone who is experienced at this game. As we know experience is earned, so how did you fair at the start of your triathlon career?**

**Sarah:** My first triathlon started with an old borrowed wetsuit. It had a zip that could be undone by pulling it upwards instead of downwards. Neither the stranger who did up the wetsuit nor I knew this, and I ended up doing a 1000m swim in 12 degrees with my wetsuit completely undone and hoping that a kayaker didn't pull me out of the water. Fortunately, I got through it and went on to successfully complete the race. Strangely, every race seemed easier after that! The experience is still growing, as is the list of funny mistakes. I won't incriminate myself here though.

**STC: Great stuff, there must be a lot of our members who borrowed a wet suit for their first race. Looking forward, where can our members see you in the coming season?**

**Sarah:** Well I'm frequently in my back garden on the turbo at 9pm at night, so if you find me there.... get out of my garden  
Fingers crossed I'll make the Road Leagues again this year, and I do make an effort to get to social events. I haven't decided what races I'm doing yet, but I'll be sticking with standard and middle distances.

**STC: Thank you Sarah for your time. We look forward to seeing more podium finishes from you and will do our best to not surprise you on your turbo.**