



Elete Athlete Profile: Sandra Tomlinson, Endurance Mountain Biker



(Pictured above: 24-Hour Female Champion and elete-aficionado, Sandra Tomlinson.)

Sandra Tomlinson is one of the most inspiring, driven athletes (as well as one of the fastest endurance mountain bikers) you will ever meet. Sandra, who lives in Jacksonville, Florida, and is the mother of three children, has been participating in grueling endurance mountain bike events for seven years. In addition to her role as a mother and cardiac critical care nurse, Sandra logs a weekly average of 200 miles on her bike. During the season, you can spot Sandra at Endurance and 24-hour cycling events all across the United States.

Recent Results

AMBC (American Mountain Biking Challenge, 5th, Pro-Women, 2007

24-Hour World Champion, 2005

Southern Lights Solo, 1st, 2005



How did you first become involved in endurance mountain biking?

“About seven years ago, when I was 30, I weighed 220 pounds and was so sick of being heavy. I enrolled in a weight-loss program and lost 40 pounds, but I started riding a bike as a way to keep the weight off. I saw a flyer advertising an MS benefit bike ride, which was how I originally got started. I thought, ‘What the heck. It’s for a good cause.’ I was also riding my bike with some of my guy friends and they invited me to go mountain biking. I went using a hybrid bike, which beat me all to hell and back. But after that experience, I came back faster, and I started doing cross-country races. Back in 2003, I did my first 12-hour race on a team and it was *the most awesome thing*. In endurance mountain biking events, it may seem like the same trail, but at night it’s completely different. The trail becomes completely and utterly transformed by darkness, and it was that part of the endurance biking events that I just became intrigued by, and I just fell in love with the sport. Not long afterwards, I competed in a 24-hour race and placed fourth; however, I was first in my age category, so I qualified for the World Championships. I ended up taking Second at the World Champs. “

What are some of the recent as well as upcoming races you will participate in?

“This year, I want to be the best. In previous years, I didn’t have the competition like I have this year. I’m expecting to be racing every other weekend. I’m faster this year, but I’m competing in a lot of races. I’ve done several 24-hour races. One of them I took third and that was with a concussion! Recently, I’ve done a mountain biking time trial; yesterday, I did the AMBC and placed Fifth in the Pro-Women category.”

This year, I plan to do several 24-hour events including 24-Hour Temecula; Dirt, Sweat, and Gears; 24-Hours at Conyers, 24-Hours at Big Bear; Trans Rockies, which is a six-day staged mountain bike race in Canada. The World Champs are in September, and I’d also like to go to Moab. So I’m basically planning to do one big endurance event each month. “

Interesting or little-known fact?

“I’ve been a Cardiac Critical Care Nurse for thirteen years. I was 5 years old when I visited the hospital where I now work. I was so intrigued watching the nuns interact with the patients. After that visit, I knew I wanted to be a nurse. Plus, my sister became a nurse, which was really very inspiring to me.”

You’re a mother of three children and you work full-time. How do you find the time and energy to do it all?

“I always say that you should do what makes you feel great about you. Competitiveness seems foreign to many women and many shy away from it, but really it comes down to doing what makes you feel good. When I’m not busy with my kids, I love riding my bike. I also love a good challenge.”

Along the same lines, what drives you to participate in ultra-endurance mountain biking events?

“I think a lot of it is that I’ve been a nurse for 13 years. After I got divorced, I would go home after being up all day and night and then I’d have to stay up because I still had a young baby. As a nurse, I’d stay up for 24-36 hours, so after that, endurance racing is not that big of a deal.

But I am *very* motivated by my kids. I wanted to show my kids that no matter



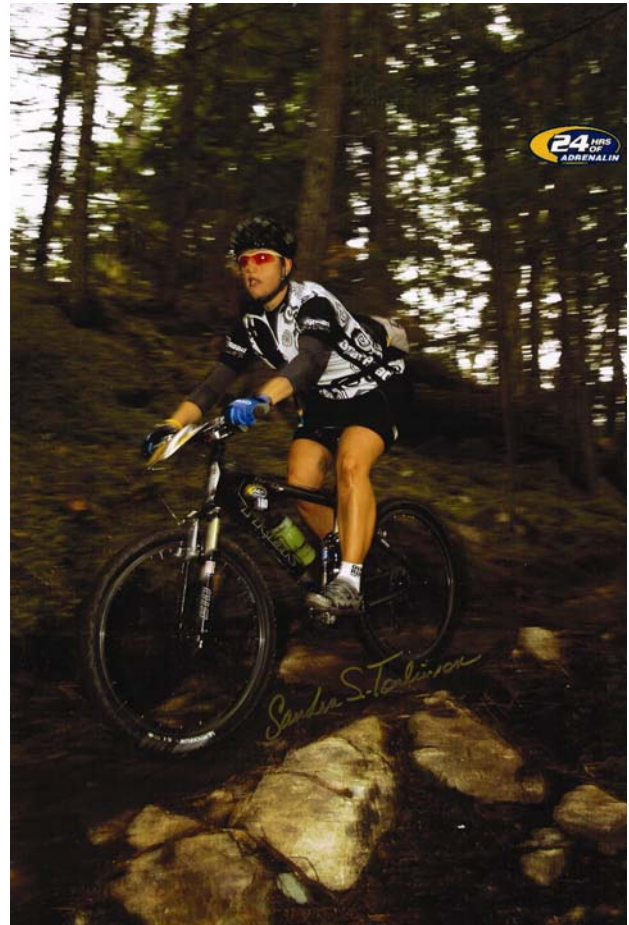
whatever happens in life—when you think the most horrible thing has happened—that you can make something positive out of it. Don't sob, don't whine, but have one thing in life that makes you feel good about yourself that you can stay focused on and move forward. Now, that one thing in life doesn't have to be a bike, it doesn't even have to be exercise, but it should be something that keeps you wanting more from life. My kids were my motivation, and I wanted my family to be proud of me.”

How do you prepare for an endurance cycling event?

“I try to ride 200 miles weekly. I usually average between 180-230 weekly, but sometimes I do 250 miles a week. I do run occasionally. I go to gym 2-3 days a week, but it depends on my work schedule. I aim to go to the gym three days weekly doing strength training. I do my strength training early in the week to allow my body enough time to recover for the weekend so that I can race. You do not want to do endurance events if your muscles are already sore. So, my workouts average two to three days of strength training, an occasional run, and cycling at least 4-6 days a week.”

What are some of the nutritional strategies you follow before competing in endurance biking events?

“I eat mostly soft, easily digestible foods. I never eat meats before a race. I don't want the blood rushing from my muscles to my stomach, which can impair performance. I also avoid dairy. I don't want to take a chance and have an upset stomach during an event. “



Sandra Tomlinson in motion.

What is the biggest factor in terms of winning an endurance bike race?

“My husband says it's making a sure break into woods. My opinion, however, is that it's making sure you have a steady, even cadence. You can push yourself for only so long before your muscles give out. That's why I'm doing cross-country racing. I focus on speed and train my muscles to work at a faster cadence, so then I can tolerate racing for longer periods of time.”



How did you happen to find ELETE?

“A few years ago, I attended Interbike, and I saw the **elete Electrolyte Add-In™** booth. With sports drinks, I always get so thirsty when I’m racing plus all of the sugar in those drinks is dehydrating. I started using **elete Electrolyte Add-In** and I was getting all of the electrolytes, and I wasn’t getting cramps. With **elete**, I knew I was maximizing my fluid intake. Plus I was able to start racing without a hydration pack with the extra weight on my back during events. I was able to start adding **elete** to my water bottles. It was amazing because it made it so simple.”

Tell us a little about your experience using elete Electrolyte Add-In in training and competition.

“When I first saw **elete Electrolyte Add-In**, I was intrigued by fact that I could use a product that I could add to anything—even water. Until there was **elete Add-In**, you couldn’t add electrolytes to water. With the sports and other electrolyte-replacement drinks, the sugar content was so high. When I drink water, I want my thirst to be quenched. I don’t want to have to take something else.

The most important thing I’ve noticed is no cramping. Cramping is an awful thing. I combine **elete Add-In** with some other products I take, and I notice that I don’t get the build up of lactic acid. My muscles don’t cramp, and I just go. I was able to lose my hydration pack, and with losing that extra weight off my back, I found that my back wasn’t killing me after a race. So, in an indirect way, I joke about this, but **elete Add-In** saved my back.”

What would you tell people about elete Electrolytes?

“Well, anybody can benefit from electrolytes. Everyone perspires when they exercise because there’s salt loss, and then your muscles can cramp. Your heart requires electrolytes. With **elete Add-In**, the electrolytes give your body an equal balance, and you can add it to anything. I add it to my regular drinking water even when I’m not riding. You can add **elete Electrolytes** to any beverage.”