

“I COMPLETED MY FIRST IRONMAN AT THE AGE OF 66”

Britain's oldest Ironwoman, Edwina Brocklesby, 74, opens up about her inspirational endurance journey

The Nottingham Half Marathon was the beginning of my endurance sport journey when I was 50. I went along to support someone who was racing, and came back and told my husband I wanted to do one. He said I couldn't run that far – I couldn't even run three miles! But, in 12 weeks, I found a plan and a friend who'd train with me and the pair of us ran our first half.

After my husband died, my running club, South Notts Athletic Pacers, was a great support network, and running helped hugely in dealing with his death. When they folded, they gave me their London Marathon place and I wasn't going to let them down.

Until the half marathon, I was never sporty. So it's never too late to start being active. In fact, I'm more enthusiastic about being active later in life. In addition to the physical training, the most valuable factor of sport is the social side.

My first tri was the London Triathlon in 1999, and I didn't tell anyone I was doing it. The swimming was a huge obstacle, and still is, despite my tri club's best effort. I'm always in the slow lane



EDWINA BROCKLESBY

After over 50 years of social care experience, Eddie Brocklesby founded Silverfit to promote active lifestyles. Her journey to becoming a multiple Ironman and GB age-group athlete began with a half marathon at the age of 50 and continues now into her 70s.



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and I can't see that changing. It's just about finding your own confidence in the water.

I've got limited life left in my knees and I'm sure there'll come a point when I need surgery. I don't have either anterior cruciate ligament, and was told never to run again by a consultant eight years ago.

I completed my first Ironman in Lanzarote at the age of 66 with my son. I've since completed five more, including Hawaii (boring run), Vichy in 96° heat and Cozumel at the age of 74 in a time of 15:20hrs.

After 50 years of social work and running an adoption agency, I

founded Silverfit. In 2014 we started thinking about how we could help older people have as much fun as we do. People come along for a meet and greet, and do a choice of activity for an hour, from Nordic walking to football. After the activity they go out and socialise. Having a social environment and getting fitter, healthier and happier in the process is the key factor in making the charity successful.

We're unique as a facility as it's run by people with an average age of 67. All have various backgrounds and have mostly met through physical activity. As a country we desperately need to find ways to keep our older population more active because not only does it benefit them, but there's a wider social care cost, too. The core message is that it's never too late to start sport.

*Edwina Brocklesby's book, Irongran, is out on 5 April through Little Brown Book Group (littlebrown.co.uk). **£20***