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Rock Band Sponsors Former Olympian Turned Triathlete



Olympic Gold Medalist, Melanie Valerio, secures the first ever Ironman tri-bike sponsored by the rock band, *Cheap Trick*.

After agreeing to extend her initial one-year commitment to the world of Ironman- Melanie decided to continue with the Timex Multisport Team in 2007 and has also been asked to represent Timex as their official *Timex Fitness Director*.

The tri-bike Melanie road her first year was not quite a comfortable fit. Due to Melanie's size (6foot3) and the disproportion between her body and legs (her legs make up 48 inches of the 75 inch body) any stock built tri-bike would not be adequate for her to reach her newly established goals.

Melanie's favorite band of all time is Cheap Trick (www.cheaptrick.com). Trying to figure out how to finance a new custom built bike to fit the frame of her body, Melanie decided to contact her all-time favorite guitarist, Rick Nielsen of *Cheap Trick* (noting Rick's penchant for custom-built guitars) thereby securing the first ever *Cheap Trick* custom-built bike.

This is a first in the history of IM—an athlete sponsored by a rock band and riding a bike decorated completely in the band's famous logo. Along with Timex and Cheap Trick Melanie is also sponsored by TRIBE Multi-Sport who with the help of RueSports created her custom bike. It should be noted that Melanie designed and created all of the graphics on the bike herself.

Within her first year of training (2006), Melanie became a sponsored amateur with the Timex Multi-Sport Team, was the 3rd fastest amateur out of the water at IM Coeur D'Alene--1st female, led the women's race for the first 3.5 hours and finished 17th in her age group.

Melanie officially began her swimming career at age 5 and has embraced her passion for swimming to this day at age 38. Her previous swimming accolades include posting the fastest time in the nation in the 100yd freestyle at 50.6 setting her as the fastest 100 freestyler coming out of high school in 1987. She also placed 4th in the 100m freestyle qualifying for the 1996 Olympics in the 4x100 freestyle relay. Melanie was also the first female swimmer to be signed by Nike as a professional swimmer/spokesperson/model. Melanie attended the University of Virginia for both her undergraduate and graduate degrees.

Now back to what she ultimately loves – athletics – Melanie has come full circle balancing her life as a full time clinical research specialist, Ironman athlete and 38-year-old female. She is in the process of developing her own swim excellence program that will help guide the general fitness population as well as triathletes to perfect their swimming skills. Melanie's *Swim-Fit System* (www.melanievalerio.com) allows swim training in the smallest of pools-a swimming treadmill of sorts. She also enjoys knitting in her spare time and has designed numerous sweaters and scarves in her own hard rock signature skull style. Melanie is also attempting to play the guitar and prefers her electric to acoustic. She finds both these hobbies a wonderful release for her creative mind. Melanie is active with volunteer work and lends a hand in her spare time to the following causes:

- The 2007 Susan B. Komen Tri-For-The-Cure race in Scottsdale, AZ.
- The 2007 Arizona Ironman Championship in Tempe, AZ.
- The JR Ironbody kids program promoting physical activity in school-age children in the greater Phoenix area.
- Official chairperson for the greater Cleveland Diabetes Association "Swim for Diabetes" annual swim-a-thon program.
- Athlete volunteer at the Navajo Nation-Jacksonville Jaguars sports camp for over 600 youth living on the Navajo reservation.
- Guest athlete at the *NIKE Let Us Play* sports camp for girls.
- Athlete volunteer for *United States Swimming* "select group" camp for kids.
- Melanie also speaks to local groups including schools, youth groups and various athletic teams.
- Melanie has been featured in numerous publications including Triathlete Magazine (March 2007), Self Magazine (May 2007) and Marie Claire (June 2007). She is a contributing free-lance writer for several health/fitness websites as well as a frequent athlete contributor for the local Phoenix news Channel 3 TV.

A media resume on CD-rom is available upon request, which includes high-resolution photos of the bike.

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