

# Student Profile

## Emily Sherrard Shines at Ironman World Championships



Photo by David Eisenberg

**W**hen you love something, you make time for it.

So as busy as medical school has kept Emily Sherrard over the past four years, she has still made time to pursue one of her other passions: participating in triathlons.

An athlete since childhood, Sherrard particularly excelled in running, leading her high-school track team to six state championships and competing at the collegiate level at Duke University. After earning her bachelor's degree, she decided her racing days were over.

Then, she changed her mind.

"When I began medical school at Jefferson in fall 2011, I felt aimless and lost without the structure of training and athletic goals, so I bought a bike, swam in an 18.3-yard pool and signed up for my first triathlon," says Sherrard, who surprised herself by winning her age group — and falling in love with the sport.

Since that first event, she has balanced the responsibilities of medical school and rotations with countless hours of rigorous training, achieving great success in both endeavors. This past fall, she proudly wore a Jefferson visor as she crossed the finish line at the 2014 Ironman World Championships in Kona, Hawaii. She had completed the 2.4-mile swim, 112-mile bike ride and 26.2-mile run in 10 hours, 20 minutes and 6 seconds, placing fourth in the women's 25-29 age group and earning a coveted spot on the winners' podium.

"I have never been so sore in my whole life," she remembers.

As her enthusiasm for competing has grown, Sherrard decided to put residency on hold after her SKMC graduation in May to become a professional triathlete.

She initially considered taking the spring semester off to race full time but chose to finish her medical degree on time, which thrilled her family, including her grandfather, John Holdcraft, MD '56, and her mother, Suzanne Holdcraft, MD '83.

"I gave my grandparents an invitation to my commencement ceremony for Christmas, and I saw tears in my grandad's eyes when he came to the realization that I would be finishing in May. He has been looking forward to my graduation from his alma mater ever since I was a first-year student at Jefferson, and I am happy to make him feel proud," she says.

Sherrard does not know how long she will remain pro, but she is certain she will return to medicine in the coming years and hopes to establish a career in sports medicine.

"Medicine is not a job to me, but a calling, and in the future my finish line is with my patients," she says. "But for now I am choosing to pursue my passion for competing at the highest level in triathlon."

— *Karen L. Brooks*

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Photo by Suzanne Holdcraft, MD '83

