

# SPORTS

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## *Runner hits goal, eyes bigger test*

■ Smith-Batchen runs seven ultra-marathons, raises \$137,000 for charity.

*By Dina Mishev*

Last summer, Lisa Smith-Batchen set out to do what no ultra-runner had before: run seven ultra-marathons – for a total of 750 miles up and down mountains, through deserts and over snow fields – in three months.

Smith-Batchen, 43, finished her last race – the Wasatch 100 – on Sept. 7. For her efforts she was one of three women nominated as Woman Ultra Runner of the Year, but earlier this month learned she didn't win the title.

But that is fine with her. "I did it so others may live," Smith-Batchen said.

Even so, Smith-Batchen finished first in this summer's Grand Slam standings. To compete for the overall Grand Slam title, a runner must finish the Western States 100, Vermont 100, Leadville 100 and Wasatch 100 in a single summer. According to Smith-Batchen, 15 women planned to complete the Grand Slam, but only four finished. Among the four women finishers, Smith-Batchen's combined times were the fastest.

Smith-Batchen ran to raise money for Religious Teacher Filippini missions, which provide food, education and shelter for underprivileged children and adults throughout the world. Her goal was to raise \$135,000 for four missions in the small western African nation of Eritrea. As of last week, Smith-Batchen had raised

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## RUNNER

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\$137,000. "And more keeps coming in," she said. "This is the first year we've reached our goal."

Residents of Teton County in both Wyoming and Idaho were generous, including one anonymous \$25,000 donation. "That was just so amazing," she said. "I wish I knew who to thank. Without it, we would never have reached our goal."

Smith-Batchen began running in 1983 and entered her first ultra-marathon, the Badwater, in 1995. She has run more than 25 ultras since then and was the first and only American to win the grueling Marathon des Sables, a 145-mile unsupported race across the Moroccan Sahara. She also has competed in numerous Ironman triathlons and won the Hawaii Ironman seven times.

This summer's seven races were Smith-Batchen's most difficult. "This was the hardest undertaking I have done as an athlete," she said. "I never would have made it if it weren't for the love and support of my family."

Jay Batchen, Smith-Batchen's husband of four years and an ultra-runner himself, attended every race. Her two children - 4-year-old Joshua and Annabella, 8 months - only missed one race. During the 135-mile Badwater race, which travels from the floor of Death Valley to the summit of Mount

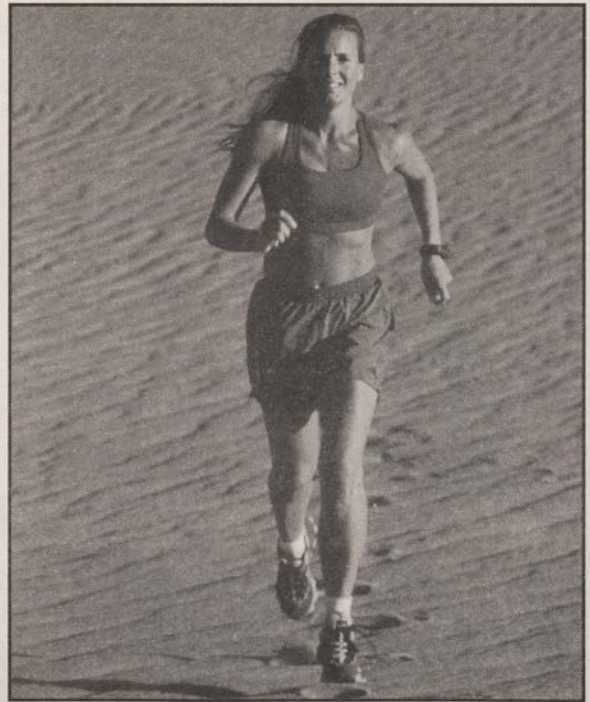


PHOTO COURTESY DAVID BROOKS

**Lisa Smith-Batchen, shown training for the Badwater Ultramarathon in Death Valley, Calif., finished seven ultramarathons this summer.**

Whitney, Smith-Batchen was having serious foot issues with 15 miles to go. Joshua sat down next to her, pulled his shoe and sock off and pointed to a small blister, "See Mommy, I have an owie too," he told her. "But you have to get going again."

While difficult, "The 2003 season was the most rewarding for me as an athlete," Smith-Batchen said. "I have never really been able to say I'm proud of myself for my achievements, but this year I am."

The missions run by the Religious Teacher Filippini, founded in 1692 and affiliated with the Roman Catholic Church, first came to Smith-Batchen's attention seven years ago. At the time, she was coaching a cross-country team at a New Jersey Catholic school and befriended one of the nuns teaching there. Sister Marybeth Lloyd, herself a runner, had recently helped found Religious Teachers Filippini missions in Eritrea, Ethiopia, Brazil and the United States. Smith-Batchen has been doing fund-raising for these African missions since.

"A child dies of starvation somewhere in the world every three to five seconds," Smith-Batchen said. "In some parts of the world mothers walk six hours to get milk and bread for their children and then walk the same distance home. I want to do my part to help fight that."

This year's fund-raising has been Smith-Batchen's most successful by far. "It seems it takes

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## SMITH-BATCHEN

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doing something a little different to raise awareness of a cause these days," Smith-Batchen said.

Smith-Batchen had barely crossed the Wasatch 100 finish line before beginning to formulate 2004's challenge.

"I've done the Grand Slam of ultramarathons, now I'm planning the Grand Slam of Ironmans," she said. Of course, her 2004 schedule isn't totally devoid of ultras however. There's Hawaii's HURT 100 in January, the Marathon Des Sables in

April and July's Hardrock 100, arguably the most difficult ultramarathon on the planet with over 36,000 feet of elevation gain.

Between these three ultras, Smith-Batchen plans to find the time and energy to do seven Ironman races: a half-ironman in Florida in May, Ironman Idaho in June, Ironman Lake Placid in July, Ironman Canada in August, Ironman Wisconsin in September, Ironman Hawaii World Championships in October and Ironman Florida in November.

Despite the increased number of races, Smith-Batchen says this schedule should be easier. "My best Ironman

time right now is a little over 10 hours, so I'll be going from 24 to 50 hours of the same repetitive movement to 10 to 12 hours, broken up between three different activities," she said. "I think it will be much easier on my body."

It will make for difficult training however. Smith-Batchen lives in Teton Valley. The spa director at Grand Targhee Ski and Summer Resort, as well as a massage therapist, personal trainer and coach, she has a mini-pool at work she can swim in, "but I'll have to anchor myself with a rope, it's not long enough to do laps in."

While Smith-Batchen will no doubt have to come up with some creative

solutions for training, that is nothing new. This past summer, with newly adopted Annabella and Joshua, Smith-Batchen did most of her workouts with a baby jogger. "I was only able to go out three days a week or so. My weekly mileage was 30, tops," she said. "It was not a typical training season for me and there were definitely times I didn't think I'd be able to do the races. Eventually I just put my faith in God. I figured that if this was something He wanted me to do, He would help me get there."

For more information on Smith-Batchen, log on to [www.dreamchaserevents.com](http://www.dreamchaserevents.com).