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The Seahawk welcomes inquiries and encourages letters to the editor.

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The Seahawk encourages all readers to submit letters to the editor for possible publication. Please limit correspondence to 300 words. The Seahawk may edit letters for space. The Seahawk reserves the right to refuse publication of any letter. Libelous, false and misleading material will not be considered for publication. All letters must be signed by the author. Letters to the editor are the individual opinions of the author and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Seahawk staff or the University of North Carolina at Wilmington. Letters can be submitted in person at the Seahawk office located next to the Bookstore, by mail at The Seahawk Newspaper, 601 S. College Rd. Wilmington, NC 28403-5624 or by e-mail at editor@theseahawk.org.

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Seahawk Viewpoints



On the Seahawk Soapbox: Salvatore Santaniello

Ordinary Mortals

As a child, I learned athletes were different. The recognition received for their efforts made my own struggles seem meaningless. Even in failure, athletes are treated with respect. If they played well, fought hard or simply given their all, they were rewarded with praise. How different it was for those of us whose failures went without notice. Physically gifted individuals hold a unique position in our culture. In exchange for their physical gifts, we grant them privileges. In grade school, those children who display athletic ability are set apart from the rest. By the time we reach high school and college, most of us have a good notion whether we are one of the chosen few.

In time those of us without athletic skills come to believe that not only were athletes stronger, faster and more daring, they also were better than we were. All of us lived in a child's mind, where strength, speed and bravery were the currency of value; most of us felt we didn't have a dime. So from early childhood I sentenced myself to being a spectator.

I remained a spectator for most of my adult life, at ease with knowing a lot about sports and about the people who played them. I congratulated myself for understanding the sports that I enjoyed and celebrated the victories of others, as though I was a participant, but I wasn't. As a spectator, I watched my own life with the same mixture of interest and detachment as I

watched sporting events.

All of that changed when I began racing triathlons. After two decades of standing on the sidelines -- watching others, of being a face in the crowd -- I stepped into the arena. For better or worse, as an ordinary mortal, I chose to be athletic. It is a simple decision and one that you can make today. From that pivotal day to the present I have competed in 16 marathons, three Ironman triathlons and countless short to middle distance triathlons. For me, a triathlon is about testing my limits and doing things most think are impossible.

Ten years ago, it had never occurred to me that it might be possible for me finish a triathlon. To me it has become something anyone can do, even if you're not a naturally gifted athlete. To most this event is a time to reflect on the positive aspects of life, and on the fact that when you get right down to it, finishing an Ironman is not what's important. What's important, what's really important, is the journey. It is this journey that teaches us how to persevere amidst the challenges and adversity each of us face every single day. You'll never forget your first triathlon. Not because you suffered adversity, but men and women of every age, from all walks of life, amateurs and professionals, come together one day to make a long, difficult journey together.

Editor's note: Santaniello is a physical education major at UNCW

Knowing the rape facts...

Obviously rape and sexual assault are categorized as negative experiences, but many go uninformed as to the specifics of the crimes.

Put quite simply, rape is defined as a sexual act performed without consent, but what, exactly, is consent?

In North Carolina, a person under the age of 16 is considered incapable of giving consent, no matter the situation.

Teens aged 16 to 19 are 3 1/2 times more likely than the general population to be victims of rape, attempted rape or sexual assault.

If a person is incapacitated in any way by drugs or alcohol, he or she is incapable of giving consent. One does not necessarily have to be on the verge of passing out; even feeling the effects of a few beers is enough to negate the ability to consent.

At least 45 percent of rapists are, at the time, under the influence of drugs or alcohol. GHB and Rohypnol, two of the most well-known of the so-called "date rape drugs," account for less than 3 percent of rapes. However, alcohol is a factor in over 63 percent of sexual assaults.

In 84 percent of cases, the victim of sexual assault is acquainted with the aggressor.

If consent is not given, it is rape, plain and simple. Prior relationships, suggestive clothing, personal alcohol or drug use, not screaming for help -- none of these preclude the event from being classified as rape.

As is the case with most everything worth fighting, knowledge is one of the most important tools to have. Another, though, is strength in numbers. Look around the dining hall, the dorm, the classroom, at your friends, colleagues, significant others.

One in four college women and one in nine college men have been victims of sexual assault or attempted sexual assault.

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