



Jeralee Jones, far right, and fellow Spartan racers maintain forward momentum on the rings at her first event.

Photos courtesy of Jeralee Jones

## No Obstacle too Difficult for Spartan Racer

*First-time Spartan racer Jeralee Jones says she is excited for the next one*



Jeralee Jones looks forward to her next race.

**By Dianna Troyer**

Jeralee Jones leaps onto her picnic table, lugs a bucket of rocks and climbs a rope in her garage at her home east of Albion. Then she runs down nearby dirt roads and suddenly drops to knock out a few push-ups.

“I’m sure the neighbors thought I was crazy when they first saw me doing this,” she says, “but once I told them I was training for a Spartan race, they got used to my routine.”

Coaching the girls soccer team at Declo High School, Jeralee, 36, was already physically fit before deciding to

try her first Spartan race last summer. Her relatives, who had done races, said they were challenging and entertaining. They persuaded her to enter a race as one of their teammates.

Spartan racers run cross country while navigating numerous obstacles. They slither under barbed wire, climb ropes and leap over flames.

“I wanted a new fitness goal, and registering for a race helps motivate me to stay in good shape,” she says.

Jeralee—who is 5 feet, 4 inches tall—estimates she dropped from about 125 pounds to 118 pounds as a result of training.



**Above, Jeralee leaps over the flames as she crosses the finish line. Right, Jeralee gets ready to launch a spear at hay bales. Racers who fail to stick the target receive a 30-burpee penalty.**



Last August, she and two brothers-in-law, a sister-in-law and a friend formed a team. They called themselves “I’m Sore Already.” They were among thousands of competitors who entered a Spartan Super Race at Nordic Valley Ski Resort northeast of Ogden, Utah. Along the 10-mile course they navigated 30-plus obstacles.

“I’m glad I did it,” Jeralee says. “We finished in about four hours. It’s challenging and inspiring to see people of all shapes, sizes and levels of fitness on the course. I encourage people to give it a try. You can do a short race to see how you like it. If you form a team, you can help each other at the obstacles without being penalized.”

Although Jeralee had read about the races, she says she was unsure what it would be like.

Spartan obstacle course races are growing in popularity nationwide because they test entrants’ physical strength and mental fortitude and “ultimately rip you from your comfort zone,” according to Spartan.com.

“If you think you can’t do it, you’re wrong. Get to the starting line and show yourself what you are capable of,” the

website proclaims.

Races are organized in categories: a Sprint with about 20 to 23 obstacles in 3 to 5 miles; the Super, with 24 to 29 obstacles in 8 to 10 miles, and the Beast, with more than 30 obstacles in 12 to 14 miles. Competitors register as either an elite racer who is competitive or an open entrant who simply wants to finish.

Jeralee scheduled her training routines around her jobs: coaching, having an in-house salon and managing the Albion Campus Retreat, a center for family reunions and other events.

She says her husband, Scott, a journeyman lineman at Raft River Rural Electric Co-op, and their daughters, Eliett, 8, and Addy, 6, were supportive.

Jeralee designed a regimen that combined cardiovascular workouts and strength training.

“You have to run from one obstacle to the next and usually lift an object or your body weight when you climb a rope or do monkey bars,” Jeralee says. “To be ready, I trained intensely from May to July about eight hours a week.

She sprinted a half-mile, jumped, climbed and carried a 5-gallon paint

bucket half filled with rocks. Given her training, Jeralee says she felt prepared when the race started.

One of the most arduous obstacles was the barbed-wire crawl.

“The wire was about 2 to 2½ feet high and was about 25 to 50 yards long,” Jeralee says. “It was hard because you had to crawl up a hillside of powdery dirt.”

After wading through water at another point on the course, she became encrusted in mud.

The inverted wall also challenged the Spartans. About 8 feet tall and 20 feet long, it had rope and chain handholds.

Another obstacle was called the Twister—a monkey bar with handles that rotate back and forth while a person moves forward.

“You had to keep your momentum going while reaching for the handholds,” she says.

Jeralee plans to do more Spartan races, although she has not picked her next one.

“It just needs to fit in my schedule,” she says. “I’ll probably do my next one in Utah. This time I’ll know what to expect.” ■