



# MONTANA CUP

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## 2010 Montana Cup Hall of Fame

### Ann Seifert

When it comes to the Montana Cup, Ann Seifert (a six-time *Ironwoman*) has been "in it to win it" as Helena's friendly and enthusiastic team organizer for women since the meet's third year in 1995. She would have started that role a year earlier but she had serious triathlon business to attend to at that time. Seifert has been an influential and central figure in Helena's endurance sports scene since 1983, when she learned first-hand that anyone can run a marathon, and that there was a new sport on the Montana horizon called triathlon. Then, Seifert the "perfectionist" wanted nothing less than to be the best in some sport, any sport. Today at age 53 Seifert's athletic goals have mellowed with age, injury and station in life, but she still continues with feats of athletic heroism and with Montana Cup team championships. And had you encountered Seifert as a fledgling, you would not have predicted all her athletic successes.

[Ann Seifert cruises to the finish of the 2007 Montana Cup in](#)



[Missoula.](#)

As a Helena junior high school student in 1970, Ann Lehmann (later Seifert through marriage) was already feeling the pangs of her competitive athletic spirit trying to surface from within. Her competitive desire was unique to her among her family of six, and pre-high school aged girls of that time enjoyed few opportunities\* to pursue athletics outside the home. There was gymnastics, but Ann was not drawn to that sport. A Helena junior high teacher named Emily Dekam provided Ann with her first athletic outlet, by starting a running based sports conditioning program that Ann walked to in the early mornings.

\* There was scholastic tennis in Montana for high-school-aged girls since 1946, but the Montana High School Association did not sponsor girls' high school track & field and swimming until 1969. Girls' cross country started in 1971 and basketball came next in 1972. Volleyball was not sponsored until 1984.

It was also in junior high school when young Ann was "grabbed" by a book detailing the storied career of the 1960 Olympic sprint goddess Wilma Rudolph. After reading that book, Ann knew she wanted to emulate Rudolph's success, and so upon advancing to Helena High, Ann turned out for the track team's 1972 sprinting crew, from where Ann's athletic path was soon rerouted over the hurdles and then finally to the distance running squad.

As a miler, Ann started the season well but failed to improve and was eventually outperformed by several teammates, a trend that would repeat itself throughout Ann's unremarkable high school track career. Ann also joined Helena High's cross country team during her junior and senior seasons, where she hovered near her team's seventh and final varsity slot, but she never did advance to the state championship meet. In retrospect, Ann Seifert attributed some of young Ann Lehmann's unfulfilled athletic dreams to breathing problems caused by childhood asthma (which was later outgrown) and to lingering extra "baby fat" that Seifert also explained made her look "a little plump."

Most athletes who fail their high school goals, soon turn to other activities after graduation, and this may have seemed the case for the disappointed Ann Lehmann. After graduating high school in 1975, she matriculated at Helena's Carroll College and lost contact with sports until 1977 when Carroll initiated its first varsity volleyball team. The new volleyball team was populated by current Carroll students who were interested in joining and Seifert (freshly married) jumped and swung at the chance.

Standing moderately tall (1.70 meters) for a female, Seifert did have a good build for volleyball. In her final two collegiate years Seifert played varsity volleyball before graduating in with a degree in sociology and criminal justice. She then moved to Missoula while her husband attended law school there for the next three years, years that treated her to the university town's highly developed club volleyball system.

Participation in club volleyball involved lots of practices and travel for games, and all that physical activity started turning Seifert into a powerful jumper. Another benefit was that she started to lose the "baby fat" that she believed had plagued her high school career. Seifert remembered her weight loss of that time being partially due to exercise and partially due to learning about proper nutrition through her experiences with a series of failed experiments with "crazy" weight-loss plans, such as the "egg & grapefruit diet."

Seifert's years in Missoula ended when her husband graduated and took employment in Helena in 1982. Back in her home town with no more competitive volleyball, Seifert was again a woman without a sport, a void that would last for one year. In the spring of 1983, Seifert accompanied a girlfriend who had enrolled in Bill Schneider's three-month long *Anyone Can Run A Marathon* clinic. The goal of Schneider's program was for participants to finish Helena's Governor's Cup Marathon, and that was a goal Seifert wanted no part of.



[La brujita bonita, Ann](#)

[Seifert celebrated Halloween 2005, Montana-Cup-style, with fellow Helena Team Organizer Pat Judge after her team brewed up a victory in the inaugural Masters' Cup in Kalispell.](#)

She saw herself simply supporting her friend, but as the marathon's date drew near, Seifert changed her mind and decided to enter the race. Seifert did complete that marathon in the surprisingly speedy time of 3:30, a time that stimulated her interest for more endurance racing. She might have reconsidered that choice had she known how endurance training would erode her vertical jump.

The first known swim-bike-run triathlon was put on in California in 1974. The Hawaii Ironman triathlon was then formed in 1978 as a contest to see which of Hawaii's existing endurance events (a 2.4 mile ocean swim, a 112 mile bike ride or the Honolulu Marathon) required the most endurance\*. In Montana, the "triathlon" first came in 1979 when the Peaks to Prairie race combined running, rowing, and riding, but the P2P was done most often as a three-person team affair. In 1983 the Helena Universal Athletics Service (an athletic equipment retailer) decided to use the P2P's team-oriented model to start a more traditional triathlon (i.e. swim-bike-run) utilizing Helena's Spring Meadow Pond.

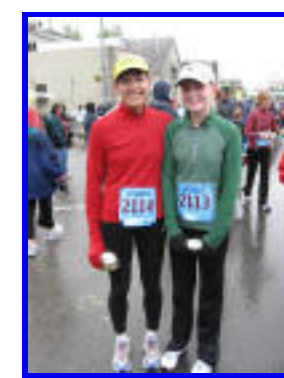
\* *The marathon, says Seifert, but only because it comes last in the order of disciplines. Reverse the order, and you will see a lot of drownings.*

Seifert, still fresh off her marathon, heard the word "triathlon" for the first time in the advertising for that tri at Spring Meadow, and she thought to herself "I'm a good runner and I can swim and bike," so she jumped in head first and finished the 1.5K/40K/10K race in fourth place. Her near-last-out-of-the-water, muddled-transition, slow-bike, try-to-catch-up run experience taught her a lesson that vaulted her to much greater future heights as an endurance athlete, and that lesson was that she needed lots of training and better equipment. The next year Seifert returned to Spring Meadow as a new and improved specimen in all three tri phases, and she won the event.

In 1984 Seifert trained with the local running club, the *Helena Hill Humpers*, and got into good enough condition to also win the Mount Helena run, a hotly contested local race where runners first climbed and then descended the mountain that stands above Helena. Seifert, excited by her new running ability, would often buoy her spirits during the first two legs of a tri by telling herself "my good leg is coming, my good leg is coming," but as she continued to improve, over the years, she came to feel that her bike leg equaled her run leg, and that her swim leg was good too.

In 1985, Seifert decided that she wanted to complete the Hawaii Ironman triathlon, but she failed to qualify in the half-ironman that she chose in Idaho. To qualify, she had to win her age group, but she finished a "whipped" fourth place, and she thought thank goodness for the qualifying procedure because she knew then that she was not yet properly prepared for the ultimate test of endurance that is the Ironman. After another dedicated year of training, Seifert didn't have to try qualifying for the 1986 Hawaii Ironman, because she had already gained entrance as one of the event's "lucky 100" lottery winners. As part of her preparation for that Ironman, Seifert competed in the five-race triathlon series in Montana, raced *Bloomsday*, and rode the *Tour of the Swan River Valley*. All the work paid off with a certified "Ironwoman" status, a respectable finish time of 11:35, and a vacation in Hawaii. The effort, however, demanded a toll on Seifert's body and she did not return for a second Ironman until three years later.

Seifert qualified for and again competed in the Ironman Hawaii in 1989. This time she started to experience cramping in her calves and hamstrings during the bike ride and the cramps intensified from then all the way through the run but she still improved her finish time with an 11:13. Again the race's toll on Seifert required more than a year to recover, and then she became pregnant in late 1990. Her lone child, her daughter Hannah, was born in July of 1991, after which Seifert worked herself back into racing form by the next spring. Her first post-delivery race was the Grizzly Tri in April in Missoula where the swim was indoors. She entered that tri only after conquering her initial concerns about her body-image and the need to hide her figure in a baggy shirt and shorts. She settled for a nice one-piece suit, and the race went well. In fact, it seemed to Seifert, that she had returned that season with a new vigor that she could not fully explain, and the results that followed have become local folklore.



**Ann and Hannah Seifert shivering together after the freak blizzard that splattered the 2009 Governor's Cup road race in Helena.**

In the August of 1992, Seifert entered Missoula's Garden City Tri, where she found herself trailing only one man after the bike leg. The leader was Scott Schneckloth, also from Helena, and the two of them knew each other's strengths and weaknesses. Schneckloth was a strong swimmer and biker but not as good on the run. Seifert was still close to Schneckloth when the run began, and at that point he correctly sensed that he was going to get 'chicked.' Seifert did cruise by as the two neared the finish, and her overall victory in that race sent ripples through Montana's male triathlete community, ripples that were felt for many years to follow.

The next two years encompassed most of the highest points of Seifert's athletic career. In 1993 (about the same date as the second Montana Cup) Seifert again competed in the Hawaii Ironman and despite re-suffering cramps, finished in 10:37, a thirty-six minute PR.


Seifert recovered quickly after her '93 Ironman and she wanted more the next year. At the '94 Whiskey Dick Tri in Ellensburg, WA she had the race of her life where she felt good on all three legs, and she added that she had a "crazy out of my head bike ... everything clicked ... flowed ... it was a hard effort but not a struggle."

Also in 1994, Seifert decided to avoid Hawaii's heat and humidity for her next Ironman, holding the belief that the weather change would prevent the severe muscle cramping that had plagued her previous Iron efforts. Seifert actually dubbed herself "Cramp Queen" of Hawaii's Ironman, and to escape this distinction she tried Ironman Canada in late August. Canada did provide more conducive weather, but the weather did not solve the problem. The cramps came again, forcing Seifert to slow while managing her pain, but she still

won the race and achieved another PR (her 10:12 lifetime best) which was also a race record for the 35-39 age group. The race had a very happy ending, but it also caused her more down time, and it ended that season before the Montana Cup. The most dominant part of Seifert's career, as an endurance athlete, was over before she ever set foot on a Montana Cup starting line.


Seifert believed that she possessed some innate physical qualities that made the triathlon a natural event for her body, but she knew that it was her passion for long hours of hard training which allowed her to attain excellence. During Seifert's height of fitness in '93-'94, she trained with a small group of male triathletes and her typical training week included five swimming workouts totaling 11000 meters. The swims were almost always followed immediately by a run or a ride. Biking often included 400 km per week with three or four 160 km rides mixed in throughout the year. Weekly running totaled ~65 km. Any more running than that caused her injuries to flare up, so she "was no fan of garbage mileage." All of her runs were designed with performance in mind. For her long runs she often arranged to have a fast training partner for the first half of her run and then another, not quite as fast, partner to accompany her to the finish. Her body weight at that time (as it remains today) was 59 kg, and coincidentally that weight was equal to Wilma Rudolph's.

Seifert returned to Ironman Hawaii twice more (1997 & 2002) to become a six-time Ironwoman. Over the fifteen years leading up to today, Seifert has missed racing six more Montana Cups, and she attributed those misses to various acute or chronic injuries resulting from her Ironman training and racing. When she has arrived healthy for the Cup, she has often left the meet as a victorious team captain. Seifert organized (and ran as fifth scorer) on Helena's first championship team in 2000 when Helena first hosted the meet, a meet that she was instrumental in managing as part of the famed organizing committee that established the meet's first real operating procedure. In the 2004 Cup in Great Falls, Seifert was again a competing member on Helena's open division team championship in a race that stood out in her memory as "crazy" due to high velocity winds that whipped the runners.

 **Ann Seifert striding smoothly through the 2011 Great Falls Montana Cup.** Seifert joined the masters age division (40+) in 1997, and has since placed among that division's top-10 finishers in all seven of the Cups in which she has raced. Still, she rated most of those performances as struggles which troubled her psyche, explaining that cold-climate triathletes must be fully prepared for the short racing season which is limited to the warm months. They must focus their training to hit a short window of opportunity which typically closes with August, and then they have two full months in which they must hold their fitness and motivation until the Montana Cup. This timing problem can cause a performance drop-off for triathletes who run the Montana Cup.

In 2005, Seifert assumed the unofficial team organizing duties for Helena's first Masters' Cup team and she did "some legwork and some real begging on some people" to gather the tremendous team that rolled to victory in that year's Kalispell Cup. Seifert's organizing role became official in 2006 for Butte's Cup when, as a recently divorced mother of one, she led her team to another sound victory. Seifert was a scoring member on both of those first two championship masters squads, but in 2008 she had to watch from the sidelines with an aching Achilles tendon when Helena claimed their next, and most recent, Masters' Cup on their home course.

Seifert explained that organizing Cup teams in Helena may be a bit easier than in other towns because their large training group enjoys an extremely developed sense of morale and team unity which is the product of weekly *Helena Vigilante Runners* club workouts each Tuesdays' noon. It is a workout group that includes up to sixty runners each time out. Her own training is now a fraction of what it was in her prime. She swims once or twice a week, and mixes in some trail riding with a smattering of running -- of course including her weekly 'nooner' workout with the large *Vigilante* group. Her relaxed training schedule is the results of balancing the challenges of ageing, lurking injuries, and increased responsibilities with three jobs and a house payment. Seifert works part-time as the bookkeeper at the *Crossroads Fitness* club where she also teaches indoor cycling (for 18 years now) and *BodyPump* weight-training classes. She also works doing freelance copyediting and proofreading. Her third job is to win team championships for Helena at the Montana Cup.

**Ballerina-like Ann Seifert preparing to**  **In her own words:** "... So, Montana Cup. Back when Ray [Hunt] came up with the idea, I thought, 'Yay, cross-country for grown-ups!'

Montana Cup's appeal initially was as a venue for myself as a late bloomer (ie. not coming into my own as an athlete until after high school and college) to participate in an event normally reserved for high school and collegiate athletes. However, in those early years, the race still felt (to me) more like an individual competition than a team event.

But as the years passed, Montana Cup became more of an opportunity to be part of a community, not only representing your town or city, but also your running community, where individuals still often play the part of the solitary runner. This was a way to strengthen the ties between like-minded crazy runner people and bring the various runner groups together.

**successfully lead her 2006 Helena team to a repeat Masters Cup triumph in Butte.** As the event has grown, so has that feeling of teamwork over individual effort. Now, as the Helena masters women's team coordinator, I relish putting together a strong team--the recruiting process (cajoling, bribing, begging), building the team's excitement, actually getting everyone on the bus! The feeling of teamwork and community pride statewide is so strong now at Montana Cup, and although I may not run as fast as I used to, I thoroughly enjoy contributing my best effort and being part of that camaraderie."

**Ann Seifert's Montana Cup History**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Ind. Place</b>	<b>Team Place (pts)</b>	<b>Masters' Ind. Place</b>	<b>Masters' Team Place (pts)</b>	<b>Notes</b>
2016	Bozeman	111	6 (149)	27	3 (72)	
2015	Helena	DNC	4 (105)	DNC	2 (44)	Meet Organizing Committee
2014	Missoula	70	5 (106)	26	2 (58)	
2013	Butte	98	3 (90)	35	4 (69)	
2012	Kalispell	41	2 (76)	15	Inc.	
2011	Great Falls	43	2 (81)	12	2 (41)	
2010	Billings	41	1 (36)	12	1 (19)	
2009	Bozeman	DNC	2 (49)	DNC	2 (38)	Injured
2008	Helena	DNC	3 (66)	DNC	1 (37)	Injured
2007	Missoula	43	2 (66)	8	3 (52)	
2006	Butte	39	2 (50)	10	1 (25)	Became Helena's first official team organizer for masters women, a group Seifert prefers to label "mature women."
2005	Kalispell	23	3 (45)	4	1 (20)	Filled the role of team organizer for masters women.
2004	Great Falls	21	1 (26)	2	NA	Despite placing high, (21st overall) was the 11th runner on Helena's super powered women's team.
2003	Billings	DNC	3 (55)	DNC	NA	
2002	Bozeman	DNC	5 (105)	DNC	NA	Recovering from Hawaii Ironman Triathlon which she finished in 11:33.  Final year as Helena's open division team organizer.
2001	Helena	31	4 (107)	3	NA	
2000	Helena	11	1 (26)	2	NA	Fifth woman on Helena's first victorious Montana Cup team.  Served on committee to develop the Montana Cup Mission Statement and operating plan.
1999	Butte	DNC	3 (67)	DNC	NA	
1998	Butte	DNC	3 (60)	DNC	NA	
1997	Butte	18	4 (89)	2	NA	Recovering from Hawaii Ironman Triathlon 15 days earlier ... "a nightmare," in which she battled bouts of nausea, dizziness and headaches to finish in 14:52.
1996	Butte	5	2 (56)	NA	NA	

1995	Missoula	8	2 (39)	NA	NA	Started as the Helena women's team organizer.
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