

➔ Kristin Armstrong is undoubtedly not only one of the most driven professional cyclists in the world, but also one of the most successful. With a race-win record that includes four national championship titles (three TT and one road), plus two time-trial world championship titles and a Pan American Games TT title, she was also the gold-medal winner in the TT at the 2008 Olympics in China.

All that by the age of 30. And then came her most important title yet. In 2010, she gave birth to her son, Lucas, and so now in addition to being recognized as an Olympic, world and national champion, she is also a mother.

With all that she has accomplished on the bike, you'd think now would be the time for her to rest on her laurels and put all of her focus on parenting. Nope. In 2011, Kristin announced that she would re-enter the sport with an eye toward repeating an Olympic win in 2012. Here's a look at Kristin's world now that her role as a cyclist follows in line behind her job of being a parent.

RBA: *Your life before having a child revolved around training and racing. What has having a baby done to change that?*

Kristin: Having a baby has brought the passion back into cycling for me. When I first started cycling, it was a fun hobby, then it became my job. Like anything we love, when it becomes our work, that can sometimes take some of the fun away. Now because I'm a mom first, when I go out to train or ride, I come back refreshed with a clear mind. I come back as a better mom.

RBA: *Did you have mixed feelings about going back to competitive cycling after the baby was born?*

Kristin: Yes, I think most women do think about going to work at any type of job as, "Is it too selfish?", "Why go back?", etc. The reality is that I needed to work; cycling isn't a very lucrative sport, so I had to decide what to do for a career. When the opportunity came to ride versus working at an 8-to-5 desk job, I realized that by riding I could actually spend more time with my family

and do what I love to do. If I have a four-hour training day, I can come home after, shower, then spend time with Lucas. It's the best of both worlds, really.

RBA: *How big of a role did your family play in your decision to return to a high level of competition?*

Kristin: A very big role. Having an incredible support system is so important. I could never do it without my

remember to do those things. I like to incorporate stretching and recovery into my play time with Lucas—that works really well. So far, he's been really healthy too. We are lucky.

RBA: *Your early career as a triathlete ended when arthritis in your hips prevented you from running. Was your pregnancy hard on the arthritis in your hips?*

Kristin: I managed to maintain a good range of motion using yoga and stretching, so I'm able to keep myself healthy without any medications. I definitely couldn't run during pregnancy, but I was able to ride until right before my son was born.

RBA: *Did you ride a road bike?*

Kristin: Yes, road and mountain. Of course I wasn't doing high intensity, and I told everyone that I carried deep, so deep, in fact, it felt like the baby had tucked up into a riding position within me. It really depends on your health going into the pregnancy and how you carry the child as to whether or not you'll be comfortable. On the mountain bike, I was in a more upright position, and I rode mostly fire roads in the area.

RBA: *Many women want to know if you wore maternity cycling clothes?*

Kristin: No, but I do think there's a great market for more maternity fitness clothes. I just kept sizing up, or I'd wear my husband's cycling clothes. But honestly, that made me look frumpy. Women definitely need more choices in maternity fitness wear.

RBA: *Did your fitness level help with the delivery?*

Kristin: Absolutely. The time to start exercising is not after you're pregnant, but before when you are preparing to get pregnant. I had some great advice from friends: "Learn to accept your body and how it takes the pregnancy. Everyone will be different. Don't necessarily take what all the books say to heart. Take a deep breath and enjoy it; it will all come back. Just be as healthy as you can be." I had a healthy weight gain of 25 pounds.

RBA: *You had a really bad crash this year at Nature Valley. Now that you are a mom, did that hit you differently*

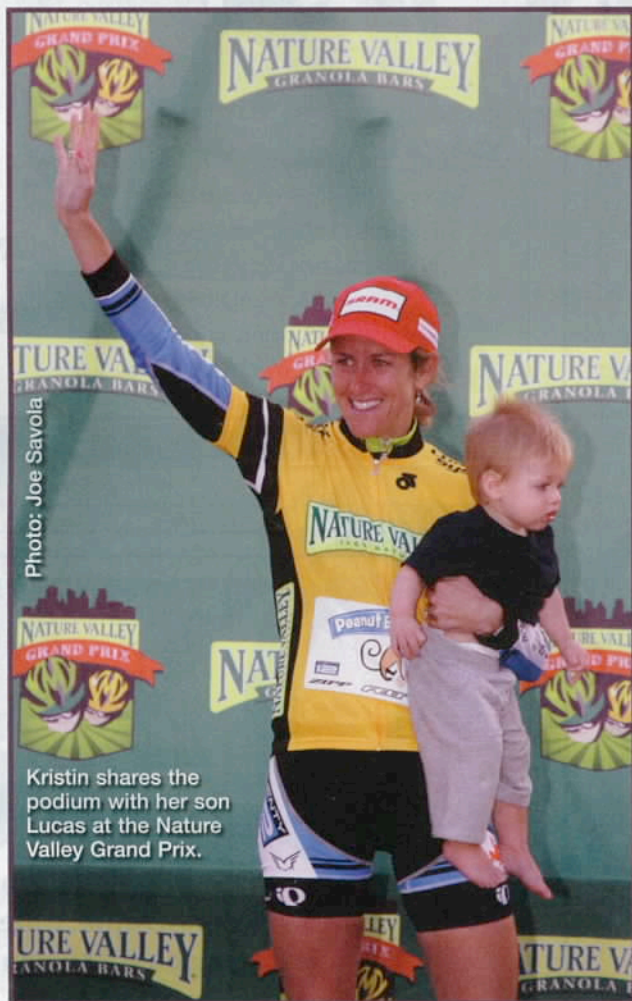


Photo: Joe Savola

Kristin shares the podium with her son Lucas at the Nature Valley Grand Prix.

husband, Joe, my parents and, of course, Joe's family. Lucas and Joe have gone to all my races—most times with family along to help. Before having a child, it's all about what you can do; after a child, it's all about the support system you have.

RBA: *Do you have to be more careful health-wise since you are now around babies more?*

Kristin: Definitely. I need to focus on recovery, rest and eating right. Sometimes it's easy to come back from a training ride or race, see Lucas and get wrapped up in being a mom, so I have to make a conscious effort to