

YOU GO, GIRL

Women athletes push to succeed despite lack of encouragement

BY CARRIE WHITE
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With all the life lessons sports can teach, it makes sense that athleticism would be encouraged equally among boys and girls.

But it hasn't always been. And in some sports, women are flat-out discouraged from participating.

"The ones (sports) that have some artistic element to them tend to be the ones that have gained acceptance for women," said Daniel M. Landers, Arizona State University Regents' Professor for Sport Science and Psychology.

He pointed to such activities as dance, figure skating and gymnastics as having the highest degree of acceptance followed by the "country club" sports of golf and tennis.

Landers said the next sports in line for acceptance for women are team sports where some physical contact occurs, such as field hockey and basketball.

At the bottom of the list are boxing and wrestling, sports in which women's participation is seen more as an oddity.

One of the reasons for the differing stance is a societal perception that certain sports define masculinity.

Landers can attest to this. His own son, a high-school wrestler, once had to wrestle a girl during a match. He remembers the attention that match got as the two took to the mat.

"It was like his masculinity was on the line," Landers said. A loss could have been devastating to the boy's self-image, laying him open to ridicule. If a girl is good at a sport, it can be a threat to the boys' self-esteem.

Consequently, girls often are discouraged from taking part in these sports. And parents sometimes feel the "girl track" sports are



BRAD ARMSTRONG/TRIBUNE

No stopping: Nancy Lieberman-Cline, 39, said the lack of encouragement to play sports didn't stop her: "I never let people make me feel bad about what I did. I was doing something I loved."

more appropriate for their daughters.

It's never too late

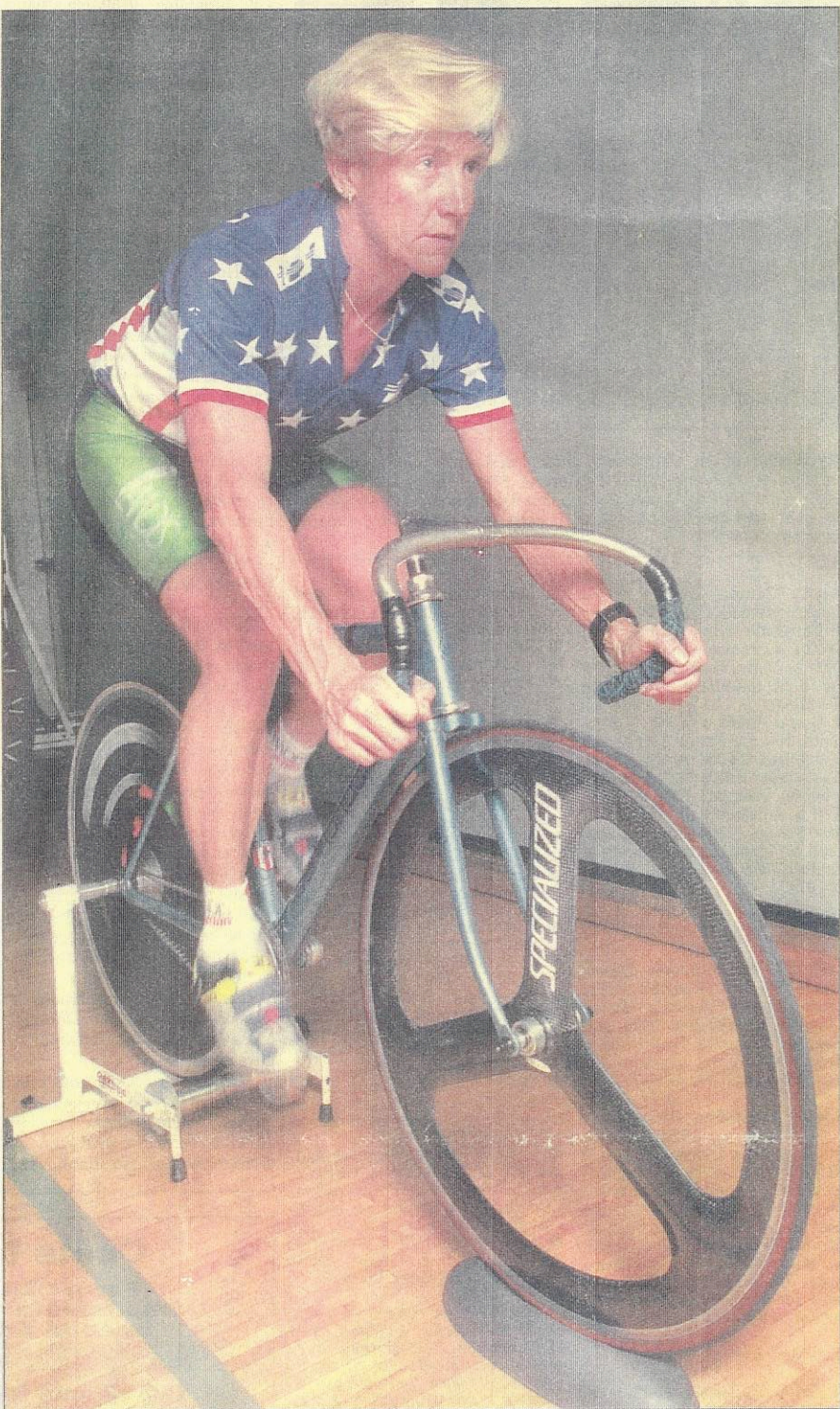
Terry Roach of Phoenix spent her girlhood cheering for the boys.

Now they root for her.

A cyclist, Roach recently set two national records and won two national cycling championships in the 500-meter time trial and 2000-meter individual pursuit.

What makes it particularly amazing is that the 45-year old mother of two, who operates her own business, took up the sport just two years ago.

This endeavor came after leading an active lifestyle that included running, skiing and tennis.



ANDY SAWYER/TRIBUNE

Good sport: Nationally ranked cyclist Terry Roach works out at the Biltmore Athletic Club in Phoenix. The 45-year-old mother of two took up the sport just two years ago and recently set two national records and won two national cycling championships. Roach said: "I never had anyone tell me I could be good. . . . I race for the joy of it. I'm not trying to prove anything, I just like it."

"I never had anyone tell me I could be good" at any sport, said Roach.

But then Tucson Cycling Coach John Serra saw her ride and asked if he could coach her. She had never had anyone like that believe in her before.

"I race for the joy of it," Roach said. "I'm not trying to prove anything, I just like it."

Encouragement from Serra and encouraging results on the track have lead Roach to realize personal truths that transcend the sport.

"I've learned that you can't give up and that you can be anything you want to be," Roach said.

But not without work and sacrifice. And she is willing to do both, setting priorities in life that include her children, her work and her training.

"More than anything I've ever done in my life, cycling has given me self-esteem," Roach said. "I have confidence in everything because of it."