

Determined Lisa Singleton is out to show size doesn't have to matter when it comes to achieving your goals, as BOB WESTERDALE reports

'MY SPORT WAS EATING'

LISA Singleton might be one of the heaviest female athletes in Britain — but she is also one of the bravest.

The working mum, who has struggled with her weight for most of her life, has thrown herself into gruelling sporting challenges, including the triathlon, as she represents Team Manvers, based near Wath.

Lisa has taken on half and full-marathons and routinely finishes in last place — but that does not faze the plus-sized participant.

Now, the 43-year-old is sharing her story in the hope it will encourage other larger ladies to realise their ambitions.

Lisa is currently 24st 13lbs and, at her heaviest, she tipped the scales at 21st 12lbs.

She admits she is a BIG eater, something which can be influenced by mood swings, and on a bad day she might eat a bacon and egg sandwich for breakfast, a mid-morning snack of chocolate and crisps, a microwave meal for lunch, more afternoon snacks and then her tea.

"On bad days I will eat anything in sight; it is quite horrific what I can put away," she confessed.

Good days constitute a bacon sandwich, a jacket potato with tuna and sweetcorn lunch, and "dirty-rice" plus vegetables for tea.

She added: "My weight is due to being greedy and lazy."

"I wish I could say it was to do with health but that would be an excuse."

For the last two years, though, Lisa has radically stepped up her exercise and is trying to control her diet, which she has struggled with for years.

"Growing up, I didn't like sports much. I did some kickboxing but my sport was eating, as much as anything," she said.

"At high school, I was bullied and that didn't help. I had all the 'lard arse' and 'latty' silly comments.

"University was a relief from that. My weight really came on there because I was in charge of my own food.

"I was just being lazy and not wanting to cook right, eating quick and easy stuff.

"Me and my hubby Darren got to-



ON THE ROAD: Lisa taking part in the London half marathon

gether in 2010 and I have been big ever since I have been with him.

"He's always wanted me to improve my weight for myself and because he's worried about my health."

Lisa acknowledged Darren's concerns, started running — and lost six stones.

"But then I stopped," she admitted. "I had our son Frankie and just put more weight on."

The lockdown brought opportunities for Lisa to start running again and she also decided to take her son, now aged eight, kayaking at Manvers Lake.

She was surprised by the warmth of the welcome there — members encouraged her to have a go at sports, including open water swimming.

"I found myself enjoying the hard work," she recalled.

"I spoke to a coach there, Gavin King, about triathlon and he just said: 'Let's do one!'"

Over subsequent months, Lisa competed in 5k, 10k, and half marathons, and now has two triathlons under her belt.

"I was last in all my events last year," she said.

"It doesn't matter, I'm never going to get to first!"

Lisa, an environmental analyst, who lives in South Elmsall, added: "Doing the London half marathon was amazing.

"The support I get on any finishing line is crazy, people I don't even know... it's absolutely insane.

"That sense of achievement is the best thing."

Lisa says the Manvers' team had helped turn her life around, yet coaches ensure she doesn't overdo it.

"They told me not to take too much on, listen to my body, get my rest," she added.

The mum admitted she still has her ups and downs about her appearance, adding: "There are days when it is hard.

"When I get on a

'I am just a nutter who just likes doing stuff'

kayak or a paddle board, I think: 'Am I going to sink it?' or on other days: 'What do I look like in these leggings?'"

"But weight must not define you. My mes-

sage is that you can do anything you want. 'I've become an adrenaline junkie even though I haven't got the body I want."

The bubbly sportswoman says her Manvers association has boosted her mental health, self-esteem, and confidence.

"It's fun, and I didn't realise I might inspire people," she added.

"I was talking to one lady who has problems — she'd read my blog and said it had kept her going.

"I don't see myself as inspirational; I am just a nutter who just likes doing stuff."

Gavin, who guides Lisa at Manvers, said: "Lisa does not fit the mould of most triathletes.

"But I said to her: 'All you need is the want to do it and Team Manvers coaches take care of the rest, if that be a marathon, a triathlon, paddling a kayak or stand-up paddling."

"She is inspirational — people see her journey and want to follow it."

"Lisa's completed triathlons and taken part in slalom races in a kayak and is making progress in everything. Her times for the events are coming down.

"She shows a will and strength of mind to achieve any goal and she's enjoying the journey."

A Manvers Waterfront Boat Club spokesperson added: "We offer access to all, regardless of personal circumstances.

"Lisa has been a great inspiration to club members and the public who have seen her compete.

"She does not let her size stop her from trying different activities and has gone from strength to strength.

"Lisa is always pushing herself out of her comfort zone and taking on new challenges — she is a fantastic role model encapsulating everything the club hopes to achieve."



A girl with a message...

Larger than life athlete throws her weight behind inspiring others