



Colleen Cannon stumbled into her 11-year career as a professional athlete in 1981, when she was offered free entry into a triathlon and thought it sounded "fun." A 19-year-old college student on a swim scholarship who hadn't run more than half a mile at a time and had only biked to classes. Cannon was surprised to learn at the finish line that she'd come in second. This accidental victory set Cannon on a path that ultimately led her to found Women's Quest, women-only fitness retreats that help participants develop confidence in themselves and in their ability as athletes.

Cannon, now 41, discovered the value of listening to and trusting herself after winning the world triathlon championships in 1984. In her exuberance following the win, she made the classic mistake of overtraining. "I started training even harder and switched to a no-fat diet," remembers Cannon. "I was working out eight hours a day and feeling worse and worse." Her poor health habits soon led to injury. While trying to rehab her "messed up" hamstring. Cannon met chiropractor Phil Maffetone, who changed her approach to training. "His philosophy is that your first priority is to be healthy and then, as a result, you'll race well," she says.

Cannon went on to win the national triathlon championships in 1988 and 1990, but found that her biggest desire no longer centered on winning. "I'd had this experience of finding myself through my sport when I stopped approaching it in a one-dimensional way. I really wanted to share that with other women."

In 1992, Cannon retired from professional racing and founded Women's Quest. During the past ten years, she and her Quest team of former professional athletes have helped other women learn that the process of pursuing their dreams can be more important than attaining them. In teaching this philosophy, the Women's Quest instructors have continued to grow personally. Says Cannon, "We keep getting more and more comfortable with who we are, so it's easier for us to help women find out who they are." -Tami Anderson