

DSU Ph.D Student Wins Car, \$10,000 in High-Heel Race!

Posted: September 28, 2010

Ida Bernstein of Baltimore recently began her doctoral studies journey at DSU by entering its Ph.D. program in optics. But she had to get through one piece of business first.

She had to compete in the morning talk show's Regis and Kelly Live's High-Heel-A-Thon 150-yard race in New York's City's Central Park on Sept. 22.

As whacky as that might sound to some, Ida outran a field of 500 women in the race to cross – or more accurately, to literally fall across the finish line – to win the top prize that included \$10,000 as well as a brand new Volkswagon Jetta and a large high heel trophy.

Her time? An incredible 19.12 seconds to run 150 yards – five-hundredth of a second ahead of the second place finisher.



Ida Bernstein stand with the biggest trophy she has ever won in her life!

And to boot, her first-place finish rated No. 9 on the ESPN Sports Network Top 10 Plays of the day, which aired that evening. Her winning run was aired on numerous stations across the country and abroad, and a YouTube video clip of the race has attracted a ridiculous number of hits, bringing her some surprising fame.

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Published on DSU (<http://www.desu.edu>)

This particular story started for Ida Marie Bernstein soon after she graduated from Syracuse University with a Bachelor of Science in Physics, and her mother challenged her to end her summer lounging around her Baltimore home and to “get a job.”

She responded by entering the 2008 Regis and Kelly High-Heel-A-Thon (which she admits was her way of responding as a smart-aleck daughter to her mother’s request).

Apparently running full speed in 3½-inch high heel pumps was one of her callings in life. In very first race, she won second place and took home \$5,000 in prize money.

The 2010 first-place prize of a Volkswagon Jetta was timely. Ida said the week before the race, she totaled her car.

The 5-foot-9 inch Baltimore native said part of her secret was to wear the high heels that she wore to help her keep balanced as she stood on the top riser when she sang alto for the Syracuse University Choir.

“I liked those shoes because they had good traction,” Ida said.

The extreme sport of high-heel races is not her only athletic gift. She is also a world-class women’s rugby player who plays on the United States team and has her sights set to compete in the 2016 Olympics in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

And, oh yes, she is also a doctoral student at DSU in optics.

“I told Dr. Melikechi (dean of the College of Mathematics, Natural Science and Technology) that my goal is to get my Ph.D before the 2016 Olympics,” she said in a phone interview she did while driving back to Dover from her U.S. Rugby Team practice in Washington, D.C.

Ida said that she continues to hold onto her long-held aspiration to become an astronaut. “It would combine my love for science and my passion for athletics,” she said.

The 26-year-old doctoral student said that she will be happy as well if her career takes her to academia as a professor and researcher. Meanwhile, she said plans to retire from rugby when she is 32 – which will coincide hopefully when she competes in the Olympics.

She is the daughter of John Bernstein and Wendy Bozel of Baltimore.

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