

Our heroines

Want to experience race car driving? First, suggests **Lyn St. James**, 47, who was Rookie of the Year at the Indianapolis 500 in 1992, get on an exercise bike and work your heartrate up to 85 percent of its max. Then hold two 15-pound weights straight in front of you, turning them back and forth, and ask someone to beat you with a ball-peen hammer to simulate the vibration and jostling of a car going 200 mph. Keep it up for two hours.

St. James has worked hard at the male-dominated sport for 20 years (she's the only woman who currently drives Indy cars) and achieved her greatest success in her 40s.

"The best thing that's happened to women is the acceptance that over 40 is not over the hill—whether it's beauty, brains, the whole thing," says St. James.

"In my 30s, when perhaps physically I should have been better, I'm not sure I would have had the maturity, poise and judgment I have now. But I wish I knew 10 years ago what I know now about physical fitness."

St. James works out at least three days a week, two hours a day, combining weight training with cardiovascular exercise. She maintains that regimen while traveling more than 250 days a year, much of it in her longtime role as a Ford spokesperson, and while nurturing her year-and-a-half-old marriage to real-estate developer and land-speed racer Roger Lessman—which includes step-parenting 11-year-old Lindsay.

"When you're single it's so easy to be disciplined and self-centered and not feel guilty," says St. James. "But I'm now sharing my life, and these are wonderful challenges to work out."

A past president of the Women's Sports Foundation, St. James uses her racing experience to guide others, and to deal with the other demands of her own life. After all, car racing requires motion and action to overcome inertia and fear.

"I get into that car and have to drive it," says St. James. "I can think about it and watch other cars going around, but thinking does not make something happen. Call it courage or whatever, that's what inspires me in my work and in my personal life. It motivates me to put the pedal down—to put that thing in gear."
—Michelle Kott

Three who have made the journey



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