

IRONMAN

By: Curt Harvel

I have finally written my story if anyone is still interested:

Signing up for a big event like a 1st IronMan makes you wonder what mother nature might throw at you on that day at 7am - RACE DAY! I have heard stories like: IM Wisconsin where the last 2 years have been either 95 degrees - 98 % humidity or 60 and rainy, the 70.3 $\frac{1}{2}$ Ironman in Cancun had a heat index of 113, the Ironman in Kona has had 55 mph wind previously for the bike ride, which took a 45 degree bike angle to just ride a straight line, the 2 previous years at Coeur D'Alene IM the temps were 95 degrees on both days. So I was expecting **HOT** with no real heat training coming out of winter, and the typical 3-4 days of spring in between winter and summer which could hit anytime after the middle of June.

We arrived in Coeur d'Alene a week early to absorb the full IM experience. We first stepped in the lake on Tuesday to have the feet experience the cold water and the head an ice cream headache. It was windy enough the week before we got there that the lake had swells over 4 feet crashing into the sea wall. So the lake had technically turned over and brought up the chilly 59 degree water from down below. So luckily there were 2300 other competitors to share the pain with.

RACE DAY:

There were 35 mph winds coming off the lake straight toward the starting line. We got there over an hour early to find a parking place, leave the car close enough to the finish line so I could crawl to the ambulance if needed. In the lake, the buoys, safety kayaks and girls on surfboards were al bobbing in and out of sight. There was an announcement made by the starter that people could pass on the swim and just do a Duathlon with only the bike and run, so roughly a 100 people took this option to stay out of the rough water, NOT ME, I signed up for it ALL!!!

SWIM:

I had my feet in the water as the cannon sounded for the official start then

while taking a quick look back up the beach and seeing 2000 people looking like deer looking into headlights. I took off thinking about the run, yes the run. If you can't get through the run, you don't finish, and with my longest training day being 100 mile bike ride with a 14 mile run, today I had another 12.2 miles of uncharted waters to fall on my face. So of course there are probably 500 athletes with aspirations of getting a qualifying slot to do this distance again at the World Championships in Kona. The swimmers ahead of me slowly started stopping to raise their heads high enough to breathe since the normal breathing off the shoulders was not going to work today. I was forced to stop behind the front group only to have 2000 people log jam up behind me. At times as I reached forward to grab water, I was in mid air and only able to grab water halfway through my stroke and then I was slammed down on the side of my face as I body surfed in the opposite direction of the path of the curling white caps. After the first 5 minutes of this FUN all I could say was "This is NOT what I paid for, trained for or ever want to be doing ever, ever again!" The 1.2 mile loop course was a long rectangle going out from the start. So when I finally got to the first left turn buoy I noticed a lot girls screaming because of the violent water and now where do I go since everyone wanted to swim shortest route. I just put my head back down and headed out another 20 feet to get around the log jam. The rest of my 1st loop was uneventful until I got back to shore. I ran up the beach, under an arched banner, across the timing mat to take a moment to wave to my beautiful wife who was in this event with me all the way. 2nd. Loop, I was right back in the water thinking this loop should be better everyone should be more spread out. The first loop was 33 min and the 2nd was 37 min. I did get my goggles knocked off twice on the 2nd loop and hit in the mouth a couple of times and left the water with a fat-lip and the flavor of blood in my mouth.

Transition 1-

With the cooler temps my transition wasn't the fastest. I took my time to make sure I had all the clothing to stay comfortable. I put on my arm warmers, cool-max headsock, jacket and half neoprene booties to keep the bones from shivering on the ride. Then I double and triple checked I had all my fuel that I had trained with and where each item was because it was a long bike ride and fueling was a must to be able get off the bike and starting running. I had a Clif Bar, Peanut Butter Sandwich, 2 Gel Flasks of concentrated Perpetuem, 6 salt tablets, 2 bike bottles of water and my aero

bottle on my handlebars $\frac{3}{4}$ full so there would be no splashing of water didn't need to be cooler with these temps.

BIKE-

We had ridden 10 miles of the course a couple times earlier in the week along with driving the course the day we got into town. The course this year was new and no longer going through Post Falls. It now headed out to Hayden and the Hayden Lake area. It was a concern whether the new community would embrace the IronMan to their area with road closures and traffic delays. But the residents enjoyed every minute clapping and cheering us on while sitting in their driveways, or standing around visiting. The 2 loop course had 5000 feet of climbing and only one really tough long climb coming at mile 35 and 90. There was a good headwind as you rode make into town reminding me what a wild ride I had on the swim. My fueling worked out perfect having the concentrated Perpetuem in gel flasks and just drinking water the the aid stations which were every 10 miles to bad training rides don't have aid stations! The support in Coeur D'Alene and in the new community of Hayden was amazing, most people were out there all day, including the 2nd loop totally 112 mile bike ride which I finished at about 3:00 P.M.

The most amazing story I keep telling everyone is:

Everyone has their age written on their calve. With one mile to go on the bike after watching hundreds of 20's, 30's, 40's and a few 50's passing me all day and now with one (1) mile to go I see a six zero (60) go by and SHE was slowly pulling away from me. So I just saluted her and stuck to my own game plan looking down the road to the 2nd half of the marathon, that was 12.5 miles further than I had run in training. I did stop 2 times on the bike to go pee but there were no problems with the stomach or cramping. YAHOO!!!

Transition 2-

I handed off my bike, went and grabbed my Bike to Run Bag then headed into the changing tent. It was my plan all along to change out everything since I had been on the bike over 6.5 hours and I had a 4.5 to 5 hour run ahead of me. There was also a urinal in the changing tent and that was heaven! The things that excite you after 7.5 hours of FUN!

RUN-

My buddy and long time training partner Dave Bishop who now lives in Jacksonville, Florida was also doing the event. It was nice to have someone out there on the course that I knew.

So as I got started on the run slowly trying to get my legs to turnover and not just ice skate along, I see Dave Bishop heading back toward me from the small out and back from the Transition Area he was probably at least 2 miles ahead of me. So that was now my motivation to close the gap on the guy who always beats me at everything. I kept telling myself get to mile 14 which was my longest training run after a 100 mile bike ride. I will see what I am made of and see how far I can get through the marathon before I have to start walking/running. I knew I would finish at the start of the run but just how strong, time would tell, this was truly a magnificent feeling!

CURTIS HARVEL
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