



Ironman Hawaii 2011

To be honest, I've struggled in writing this race report –something you might have guessed from the two month delay in getting it finished. You might have also thought, given this delay, that there would be some great insights, or at least an 'insiders scoop,' on the culmination of 10years of work towards achieving a goal – a goal that I set after my first IM World Champs in 2001. If you did, well I'm sorry. I've got nothing to share. I have nothing to share because almost every one of you reading this has been part of my journey to this point. You all know the work that has to be done, the dedication required, and the management of wins and losses along the way that are necessary to put yourself in the position of achieving a goal. You've also seen me at my best, worse and all the places in between. But now, here I am, finally a 'Podium Girl'.

It was quite a while after IM Germany that my age-group win and engagement to Glenn sunk in, but when I finally felt physically ready to focus on Kona my head was on a different path. In the back of my mind I was thinking things like; I shouldn't dream of things getting any better, that I should be happy with what I'd achieved, and 'I should play it safe'.

Despite this internal struggle, as October 1st rolled around and Glenn and I boarded the plane for the Big Island, I didn't feel like I had lost any fitness. This was a good thing too, as I had a large group of friends and supporters in Kona, so not an ideal race to not put 100% behind my effort. Included in this group were:

- My great friend Dave and his Mom
- Stuart and CK and son Matty from Australia
- super-star and my AG co-competitor - Lisbeth Kenyon and her hubby Todd
- my sponsors from CEEPO – Marc-Andre and Gilles
- the NRG crew of Nigel, Fiona, Brandon and Sylvie
- the duo of Tara and David
- my friends from Alberta -Jamie and Carolyn who were there to watch their son Jonathan race (18-24)
- Ginny and Andrew from BC with their daughter Matty (no typo – two Matty's who became good friends)

- Tom and Dorothy Hall
- Barry Siff
- Karen Glendinning from Scotland (who I first met in St. Croix)
- Chris and Barbara Domony from the UK (who I also first met in St. Croix)
- Flo and Ron
- a big gang of C3 athletes and supporters
- my big brother Gord
- and, not the least of all, Glenn

Missing from my 'entourage' were Maureen and Chris, but the nearly daily calls and emails made it feel like they were there too. Phew... with all these friend and supporters, how could anything but a perfect day be mine??

The week leading up to the race was busy - period. I was worried that I was doing too much, but at the same time I really wanted to enjoy all that race week had to offer. Highlights of the week included racing the PATH 5K where I attempted to build on my 'stats' in the Rooster vs. Laid's challenge – sadly, Glenn was able to pull off another win –argh. I also got to spend some quality time with Matty and learned how to speak to a 3-year old Australian (icy-pole, anyone?). Stu and I swam almost every day from the rocks right in front of the condo, but we missed swimming with the pod of dolphins. I also found out that my brother can speak German!!! While it's been many (many) years since Gord lived in the German speaking part of Switzerland, he was still able to carry a conversation... eindrucksvoll!!!!

And, as things go, soon enough it was race morning. All went smoothly through check-in and bike prep and I enjoyed hanging with Glenn, who provided me with some last minute words of encouragement. I found Stu, waved to Gord and Dave (both of who were on the sea-wall), and got into the water to do a little warm-up. Right away I noticed that my timing chip strap was loose, so I swam back to shore to tighten it. At the exact same time, a huge wave came in and I was mashed against the rocks – a very sore hip and a cut (now scar) on my shin was the result. Unfortunately, this pre-race miss-hap was a sign of things yet to come.

I'm not sure what made this year so different than years past, but for me the swim start was horrible – perhaps there was still some turbulence from the 'high-wave' system that had moved through Kona in the days before the race. I tried in vain to keep calm while being continually pushed under the water – this was the most scared I've ever been in my now 20 starts of an IM race. At one point I tried to get my swim cap off so that I could wave it to a guard to pull me out of the water, but I couldn't get my hands to my head, and I certainly wasn't above water for anyone to see. At some point the voice in my head said "Just Swim". I had to go with the masses.

Given the fierceness of the swim I shouldn't have been surprised to see, upon exiting the water, that the timing function of my watch had stopped – I knew that a 46 min swim was possible (in my dreams ;-))

but not on this day... sigh. Bigger sigh when I saw the race clock at 1:06! Well, at least I'm consistent... I don't think I've ever been much better, or much worse, than a 1:06 in Kona.

I got through T1 with no mishaps (remembered to take my skin suit off, unlike 2009 when I ran to my bike with it still on) and to my bike, just to see Lisbeth getting ready to run out... "OK, so everyone had a crappy swim" I thought, which strangely enough gave me a little bit of encouragement!

Swim time: 106:33



Prior to Kona I'd made some significant changes with my bike – primarily... getting a new bike!! My new CEEPO was not only lighter and more aero than my old bike; it was also super pretty, and very comfortable. Part of the comfort came from the video-analysis of my set-up I received from Todd Kenyon (www.ttbikefit.com). Despite the apparent 'conflict of interest', Todd gave me some great recommendations that helped me achieve a more aero fit on the bike. Another difference this year was that I was wearing the new CEP triathlon specific compression shorts. I'd found in training that my legs felt 'fresher' after long rides and I was able to more "easily" do my transition runs... the new shorts were key! All of these things helped me to a 13minute PB on the bike (this despite a nasty 'stop and go' penalty for blocking – argh... couldn't the marshals tell that the wind was pushing me away from the side of the road?? You'd think the sideways lean would have been a good hint! – oh well).

Bike time – 5:33:51



Buoyed by a great bike I headed out onto the run... seeing Gord at the top of the first hill was an immediate boost, and then Dave right after that who gave me a good dose of encouragement. I felt good. Really good. Maybe too good? I continued to run my pace. I watched my watch, I made sure I wasn't going too fast, I stayed positive. I saw Glenn as I passed SeaVillage – thankfully he hadn't gone inside for a beer!! CK and Matty were there as well – what a boost to hear that great kid yell “Go Nyea!!!” Then along came Stu – no, not from behind me – but running towards me...I guessed that he was maybe about 40 mins ahead of me. A sad thought given that running is his thing – so much for winning the wager this time (I had to finishing within 1hour of Stu's finish time in order to be deemed 'the winner')!!!

All was going good though, and as I ran towards the turn around on Alii Dr. I saw Lis – I was sure she was in first place. After Lis I recognized another gal in my AG wearing a blue two piece “OK, that's two...” I kept one eye on my watch and the other on the people running towards me, but I didn't see any more girls in my AG before hitting the turnaround – wow, could I actually be in 3rd place??

“I think I'm in 3rd”, I tell Glenn... “Just keep on your pace” he says. OK?? Not the response I was looking for....What did he know that I didn't? At the bottom of Palani I saw Dave again. He said that he thought I was in 4th, but only a bit behind the girl in third. As I ran up Palani I saw my target in the blue two piece, and as I closed in on her I kept thinking, “You have to pass with confidence” – a little hard to do when you are running up the steepest hill of the run course... but pass her I did, right at the crest of Palani... so was I in 2nd place, or 3rd... I wasn't sure.

Predictably, I slowed once onto the Queen K, but I was energized to first see Jamie cheering everyone, and then a short time later to Stu and then Andrew, both running incredibly strong, and smiling – they were on the count-down miles to the finish line (sadly, Andrew's race ended before hitting the finish line when he collapsed on the Queen K, I believe due to extreme heat-stroke). As I neared the Energy Lab I saw Nigel, Fiona and Sylvie... I told them I was in 2nd, looking for confirmation from them... none coming – shoot!! Just then Lis appeared. She had completed the out and back in the Energy Lab as I was just entering, so again I kept my eye out for any other gals who might be in our AG.... I didn't see any.

As I neared the turnaround at the end of the road I had an urgent need to make a port-o-pottie stop. Unfortunately, this was not the only unscheduled stop I had to make, as after completing the run turnaround I had to go back again to the same port-o-pottie, and then upon exiting had to run directly across the road for the 3rd stop. OK, not so good as I now had no idea where the girl was that I had passed on Palani Rd. I slowed to a walk through the aid station at the top of the Energy Lab – Glenn was right there and was looking worried - I kept walking and drinking.

I tried every positive phrase I could come up with... nothing was making me feel better... nor was the war in my stomach. I decided to make one more ‘road-side’ stop and then I knew I had to run as hard as I could to keep whatever place it was I was in. While this portion of the run course goes on forever, I don't have one memory of this section to share except “This is long. This is hot. Keep running! ”

As I got to the top of Palani Road I asked a spectator if he had seen/could see a girl in a girl in a blue two piece Negative. Not that this was worth anything, except it made me feel better. On the way down

Palani I saw David and Tara – they were screaming – and so were my legs! Again, I have no meaningful memories from this part of the course... except “Run, Run, RUN”. As I rounded the corner onto Alii Dr I started to feel some elation, I started to get choked up, and started the party in my head... and just then a girl ran past me. NOT AGAIN!! I was being passed again, so close to the finish line - and this pass had the potential of a worse consequence than a flag being opened in front of me and ruining my finish-line picture (like at IMGGermany). This gal could actually be in my AG! I ran as hard as I could, but nothing doing... she maintained her lead.

Run time – 3:42:39



And so came the end of my 20th Ironman, and my 8th World Championship, a gut-out run to the finish, a BlazeMan roll, a 64 minute gap to Stu's finish, and then a big hug from Glenn and a dozen roses! Somehow he had managed to convince the race organizer to let him behind the finish line so that he could greet me... something to do with a make-up for me having to wait for him in Germany!

(see very small Linnea on the ground – rolling!!)



Finish time 10:29:34 – an 18minute PB in Kona – 2nd/50 W 45-49!!!

Dave and Gord soon joined us as we made our way to collect my clothing, have some food and share stories with Stu and CK. Unfortunately, the taking of pictures was delayed by my 45min trip to the med tent after leaving the contents of my stomach in a garbage pail. Yup, this was the first time that I'd actually thrown-up after finishing a race, a sure sign (according to the Dr.) that I had heat stroke/exhaustion.

It is almost impossible for me to wrap up this race report in any meaningful way, except to thank the many, many, many friends, supporters and sponsors who have always believed that I would reach my goal of being a 'podium girl' in Kona. This year I did that and then some, with not just being on the podium, but placing 2nd to my friend Lisbeth - which was a huge honour, and one that I will never forget.



Special thanks go out to CEEPO, Swift Carbon, CEP, 7-Systems, NRG, CLIF Bars, and Sports Performance Centres.

Extra special thanks to Gord, Dave, Maureen, Chris, CathieBob, Jackie, Tara, David, Kim, Aubrey, Nigel, Fiona and all my training partners... and especially Glenn.

To round out the exceptional Kona experience, Glenn and I had a commitment ceremony at one of the amazing lava beaches in Kona. Kona is a special place for so many reasons, and for us it was important to celebrate our engagement and future together with those who were in Kona.



It seems that 2012 might be a year of a new focus, one that includes me wearing a big white dress, but for sure there will be some lycra outfits along the way as I train towards new goals... perhaps this time it won't take me as long to achieve them – although, the past 10years have been a whole lot of fun.