

IRONMAN BRASIL 2010

It was exciting last May when my friends Kat and Kevin from MTL, Hard Core Kim, Supa-Star Jackie, Fabulous Dave and I all got on-line and registered for IMBrasil '10. The only out-lyer was Glenn who couldn't decide if the agony of indoor training over the winter was worth a Brazilian holiday. Yup, "cute... not so smart".

Fast forward to the end of 2009 and two significant changes:

- 1) Dave announced that he was moving to California for a 6-month temporary work placement – humm....I immediately thought "I'm going to loose a training partner", quickly followed by "That \$#^%. Living in CA he will be able to train more".
- 2) Glenn registered! Ok, loose one training partner – gain another.

By early 2010 another change happened when, due to a back injury, it became evident that Dave would not be able to race. By April we'd lost another compatriot when Jackie also withdrew from the race. Both were missed on race day and, even more-so, at the after-party!

In February, seeking warmer training, Glenn and I headed to Florida. We spent a week riding in cold, but sunny conditions, running in orange groves and watching the winter Olympics! By early April we were ready for another "warm weather" training holiday and jetted off to California to visit and train with Dave – yet another cold (and some rain), but sunny, cycling holiday. The riding in CA was fabulous, the company stellar and with the addition of Kim to our training group I finally felt that I was as prepared as possible for Brasil.

We arrived in Florianopolis the week before the race and settled in quickly – immediately having our bikes checked by the mechanic supplied through Ken Glah's company. This alone was worth the fee of booking through Ken, as a few 'issues' were discovered with Glenn's bike, but which were all successfully repaired. Race week was relatively uneventful – we enjoyed getting to know Dede Griesbauer and a fabulous couple (George and Marianne) from Calgary, walking on the beach, swimming in the ocean and sharing a dinner with Kat and Kevin at their condo. Kim arrived on Friday and that sounded the final tone that the race was actually upon us!

Race Morning – overcast, pink sunrise, 17 degrees

Race Start – total chaos – swim time 56:16

While the race organizers tried in vain to allow the pros a 10 meter gap from the main field in the mass start, the rubberized mob quickly pushed its way to beyond the starting line and the horn to begin the race was sounded, albeit with a side note of panic! Immediately tons of people started to run into the water heading to the far right of the first bouy – obviously they were all aware of the currents. I started on the same path but found that I was able to hold a fairly straight line – be it punctuated by vertical lifts – and I continued to make some great forward motion. The swim course is a lop-sided "M" shape, traveling from the far right side of the M, exiting at the bottom point for a beach run, and then entering the water again for the second, and shorter, leg of the swim. On the exit of the first loop I checked my watch – 30mins – cue "holy moley"!!! In 2008 my total swim time was a very slow 1hr 12mins so I was prepared for something similar. "Ok, I thought, "a 1hr swim, or close to it, is possible". On the return leg of the last loop I was able to catch a couple of good waves and body surfed to the beach. On exiting the water I checked my watch again, and saw (again) 30mins – CRAP, I figured that somehow I'd hit the stop key. Before total panic hit (all while running to the wetsuit strippers) I took a closer look and noticed that I was actually on the split lap-chrono face - phew.

Looked like my time was about 56mins, but I wasn't at all sure. Luckily I was out of the water early enough to miss the masses running from the beach to T1 – and was the only one in the women's change tent. I asked a volunteer what time it was – 8AM she said. Ok, confirmed, I'd had a very fast swim (in fact, 4th fastest female armature swim time and 1st in my AG).

**Bike – not so windy, lots of men who don't like it when a girl passes them
Bike time – 5:28:06**

My bike was not as stellar as my swim, and I have to admit that I lost my concentration and hence speed (I also spent a lot of time dropping back as guys blocked the road ahead of me – very frustrating)! It was fun though to see Glenn making-up time on me on each out-and-back, and then eventually catch me – right at the 90km mark! As we rode through special-needs pick-up I was right behind him. Over half way through the second loop I was passed by a gal who I expected was in my AG, and then shortly after her another one (conveniently cloaked in a pack of men). I tried to pick up my pace, but nothing seemed to be firing. With about 30k left in the bike Kim rode by me and that gave me the push I needed to get my head back in the game, a little too late for the bike but not too late for the run!!! It was fun to have lots of cheers on the bike course due to the fact that I was wearing my Brasil kit. Down side of this is, because everyone thinks your Brazilian (hence the cheering), they also think you can speak Portugese...not so good when you are trying to find your special needs bag...which I didn't.

**Run – overcast, some rain, humid
Run time – 3:44:51**

I got into T2 and there was Kim, but we were the only two in the tent. A quick hello and she was gone and I set to getting myself ready to run! I've recently started wearing CEP compression shorts and while they feel great for cycling, they make my legs feel even more fabulous for running!! The run course in Brasil is certainly challenging with a couple of super hard hills on the first loop, however once that's done you are half way through the race. The second and third loops are the same (third loop repeating the second) so mentally it's very easy to mark your way though the course. I caught Kim early in the first loop and then I focused on running consistently and keeping my mind in the race. I knew that there was a gal behind me in my AG and I tried to mark our gap each loop – I felt confident that I could stay ahead of her and kept hoping that I was in 2nd place. My legs were killing me but I kept at it, using every reaffirming phrase I could come up with, and soon enough I was running to the finish line.

**Finish Line – behind a guy with his parents so no finish line photo for me
10:16:43 – AG placing: 3rd/33 – 5th amateur woman, 12th woman overall**

A couple of weeks have passed since the race so the glow of the accomplishment is a little less (as is the tan), but I'm still very happy with how things went. There are always a lot of "should have, could have, would have" – and those will hopefully inform me the next time I'm out on the course. To paraphrase my good friend and mentor Stu, 'On the day I had a bib on, there was a guy who said GO, and I raced'... and it was all good! Thanks to all my friends who cheered from afar, those who cheered and raced with me, and to Glenn for being a target to chase!!

All in all, a very successful day: Kim won her AG, Glenn was the first amateur Canadian across the line, Kat and Kevin finish the first of 3 IM for the 2010 season, and I put Ironman #17 in the bag!