



Ironman Florida - Nov 6, 2010

Ironman #18

After a difficult 2009 IM Hawaii race I decided not to try to qualify for the 2010 World Championships. Instead, I would race my favourite IM (Brasil) and then compete at IMFla to try to qualify for Kona 2011 as I really want to go head-to-head with the Man they call Lance!

Brasil was a great race for me and I placed 3rd in my AG in 10:16. I learned a lot about myself too, such as: I can swim under an hour in the ocean (56mins), I can lose my concentration on the bike (5hr28-eeks), I can run hard right to the end of a marathon (3hr44), but perhaps most importantly, Glenn can beat me at an Ironman with enough time to have a 10 minute nap on the ground at the finish line (at least I think he was napping!).

The real work for IMFla started midsummer and resulted in a big gain in my running. I was (happily) concerned that I wouldn't know how to properly pace myself with this new found speed, so Glenn and I spent a lot of time talking about what the best race plan would be given this and my other abilities.

But planning for an Ironman goes beyond just the race and so, while Glenn battled the flu in the 2weeks prior to the race, I prided myself on staying healthy and used my superior organizational skills to prevent any last minute hiccups to our pre-race plans. However, because this was an Ironman, and an Ironman with Glenn, there was bound to be some "drama" (or as he would say, "excitement"). We had decided to drive to Buffalo for our flight to Panama City Beach and to send our bikes with Aubrey's transportation service. So, the night before our departure, we dropped off our bikes at Maureen and Chris' (as they were, in-turn, delivering them to Aubrey for us), and then turned-in early for our 6AM start the next morning. Getting to Buffalo was going to be easy. Without any hesitation (or discussion), we (I) decided to take my car as it fell into the category of "more trustworthy" than Glenn's 13yr old "Le Sable" which is in the category of "The finest in European Styling", with "Rich Corinthian Leather" interior, and "genuine Saskatchewan Seal Skin" seatbelts. Well, to make a long story short, my trusty Subaru sputtered (or more accurately, had a severe hacking cough) and died on the Burlington Skyway with a 1.5hr drive to Buffalo remaining. Luckily, we managed to get off the hwy, coasted through a red light and almost made it to a gas station, at which point the car made one last gasp and came to its final resting place – at which point we pushed it the last 20m! After a frantic discussion (OK, frantic on my part) we split up - I placed calls to CAA and my dealership, while Glenn made calls looking for an international airport taxi company. After 15 minutes we regrouped and it seemed that our best (and only!) option was to give a "shout out" to our friends...yes, you guessed it ...Maureen and Chris! So, at 7:02AM EST I placed the call, made the plea, and Chris arrived in Hamilton at 8:10AM!! I can't thank Chris and Maureen enough. They truly are Life Savers.

With that experience behind us we were ready to put our "race faces" back on and to also face the sun and the heat!!! Well, not so much...the days leading up to the race were a mixed-bag of weather - a few warm and sunny days, two days of rain and then a cold front blew in bringing lots of wind and very cool weather – right on cue, the day before the race. After attempting a pre-race prep swim water conditions were added to our list of pre-race concerns of: (1) wind and (2) cold, as the waves were huge and the undertow very strong. With a field of ~2,500 competitors, including approximately ~1,300 first time IM athletes, I was sure that someone would be in trouble if the surf conditions stayed the same.

RACE DAY

Race day dawned with winds gusting to 20mph and a lovely temperature of 4°C! I had packed socks, hat, gloves, long-sleeved shirt, and a vest (with arm-warmers tucked in the pocket) in my T1 bag hoping that I wouldn't need all of them – no such luck. I also borrowed a pair of thick toe warmers for my cycling shoes from my “Ironmate” (thanks honey bun!!). Gosh, were we really in Florida??

Before the swim started the announcer gave a shout-out to everyone celebrating a birthday - including me?!?!??? With my birth date inverted, I was now born on the 6th day of the 11th month, and NOT the 11th day of the 6th month. Happily, this mistake garnered me a lot of attention throughout the race! After a quick goodbye to Maureen and Glenn on the beach I headed to the front of the pack... ready to go.

Water conditions were calmer than the previous day, but the tide was extremely low. This meant a lot of ankle-deep running both getting into and out of the water on the two-loop swim. The start wasn't too crazy, but annoying enough to have me ‘gurgling’ a few choice words. The packs of swimmers started to thin by the second turn buoy, where we headed back to shore. Luckily there were no sharks, stingrays or jellyfish to get in my way – always a possible perk at IMFla! I “bottomed-out” well before the beach at the end of the first loop, but as I ran towards the turn around the announcer said something like “Here’s our birthday girl - Linnea Humphrey” HA! The second loop was smoother sailing; I had fairly good sight-lines and felt really strong the whole way. After a quick look at my watch on exiting the water (YES! Under an hour), I started the LONG journey through T1.



T1 included running the entire length of the transition zone 3 times as the “change tents” were located inside the host hotel. From the beach we entered at the back of T1, grabbed our bags, ran to the exact opposite end of the transition zone, changed inside, ran back again to the far end (where my bike was), and then all the way back through - one final time - to exit onto the road. This “journey”, in addition putting on every piece of clothing I had, resulted in a very slow T1. To add insult to injury, did I mention it was freezing? It was now a balmy 6 °C. In fact, due to the strong head/cross winds on the way out of town, I experienced ‘pins and needles’ in my legs.

By 25km I'd lost all feeling in my fingers, so out came the arm-warmers – although I only put them over my hands (this, by the way, was not simple and the loss of the opposing thumb made it just as hard to grab my rear bottle as it was with my frozen hands). I gradually started to warm, with the exception my feet, and made it to 90km within the “This is still ok, don't panic” time-frame. After getting my (still frozen) bottles at special needs I heard Glenn call my name. A quick calculation put him about 4mins. back - how soon would he catch me, was now the question. The next 40km was back into a headwind and I was losing time, however, after the turn south I enjoyed the tailwind and settled into a strong effort. By the time I got to the second (and new) out and back, at approximately 155km, Glenn still hadn't caught me. So, I set out to negotiate that insulting headwind, one final time to the turn around, and then back out again - finally, there he

was. With 10km to go Glenn went past and I kept my watts steady and him in my sights, all the way (ok, almost all the way) to T2. I also got a few 'thumbs-up' from guys as they passed me at this point which made me think that I must be close to the 'pointy-end' of the pack. Always nice to have positive encouragement. ☺



T2 had a much better layout, so a bit faster, but I still had to take off all those extra layers. As I exited the change tent I heard Glenn's name being called – 'Ok, maybe a minute or so up on me' I thought. Now the question was who would win our wager!

With my still frozen feet, I set off on too quick pace, as I felt good otherwise. A friend of mine was watching the race and so I had conscripted him into being my official "spotter". At mile one I saw Kevin and he said that he thought there was one girl in my AG about 5 mins. ahead of me – COOL! I knew I was running too fast and, despite it feeling sooo temptingly easy, I focused on slowing down.

At 5km into the run I ask a group of girls standing in the back of a pick-up truck if they knew how many amateur women were ahead of me. They said they weren't sure, but promised to count and tell me on the return leg of the first loop. I continued feeling good....until I hit the turn around and the headwind...ARGH! When I reached the girls again they went wild cheering – I guess someone switched their Gatorade too!?! "You're 4th!" At this point I was as excited as them, even without the "Liquid Encouragement". As I neared the turn to start the second loop I saw Glenn at special needs and gave him a shout – but no quick time-gap calculations this time...I can't run and do math. Shortly thereafter I passed my friend Bob and gave him a friendly slap on the rear-end! "Happy Birthday" he yelled (what a Smarty Pants!). This section of the road was so crowded that I couldn't see Glenn, but soon enough there he was! I made a conscious effort not to use him as a target, but focused on keeping my pace. I slowly pulled him in, passing him at 25km which, coincidentally, was at my own personal cheer-leading station of the now "REALLY HAPPY" girls. Glenn asked if I was on pace, I told him I was, and that I was 4th overall, he said "You're Awesome. Stay focused." – part coach, part boyfriend ☺. As I pulled away from him I smiled to myself as I could hear Dave saying... "There she goes again ...Doodely ...Doodely ... Doodely"

Once in the park I felt really strong and passed a few more women knowing that at least one of them was on her second loop. The headwind coming back on the last section of the run took a bit more out of me and I started to have a twinge of a cramp in my quad. I took an extra salt tab, put my head down and told myself to run! Once I hit Surf Road I knew there was only a little over 2km to go to the finish. At this point I start to pick up my pace, passing a guy dressed as superman, passing a girl in lederhosen and then passing three women strutting around in um.... interesting outfits – nope, no hallucinating on my part, just their own personal Halloween hang-over!

I started my all out sprint in the finishing chute, but just a little too late to get an even number – clock time: 9:58:08.



As I waited for Glenn, I tried to pull myself back into consciousness, but unfortunately I missed seeing him crossing the line. After we congratulated each other, and posed for our requisite "Ironmates Photo", it was time for a hot drink and some warm clothes!



Finishing Stats

Swim time: 0:59:24

Bike time: 5:19:58

Run: 3:29:45

(run PB by 15 mins. and 3rd fastest female amateur run)

Official finish time - 9:58:09

2nd Amateur Female

10th Female Overall

2nd Age-Group 40-44

Who would have thought that the two fastest amateur women on the day (and the only amateur women to break 10hrs) would both be in the 40-44 AG!! How spectacular is that?

Looking ahead to 2011, Kona is now confirmed. But before I compete in the World Championships, I will be racing in Frankfurt next July in the European Championships. This time I promise to pay more attention and watch Glenn as he finishes! ☺

I had some great support this year, including: CEP compression clothing, Dr. Scotty at Sports Performance Centre, Aubrey Bryce (official bike transport and mechanic), Nigel of NRG, ARGON, 7Systems and Running Free.

But it wouldn't be the same without my many wonderful friends. Special thanks to:

- Maureen and Chris for items too numerous to mention
- CathieBob for the morning motivation and coffee
- Dave for his virtual cheering/support (yes, still the record holder – on the OLD course☺)
- Jackie and Larry for their 'unique' run-workout support (insults do work!)
- Kat for her always positive outlook
- Lisbeth for setting the bar so high and giving me something extra to work for
- Stu for his Aussie-style support (run scared, my friend)

Last, but certainly not least, Glenn. He not only fulfilled the role of wonderful (and long-suffering) boy-friend, but also took on coaching and motivational responsibilities as well - thanks for making this the best experience in so many ways (p.s. - enjoy painting the condo!!)