

IRONMAN COW



September 12, 2004

PARTY ON, DUDE!

Another race, another race report. This will make #8 for those of you lucky enough (???) to still be on my distribution list since 1999 and my first IM report. As I push up towards double digits in my IM career, I still feel like I have so much to learn.

A WORD ABOUT SPONSORS AND SUPPORT

First off, I really want to thank my major sponsor this year. Yes, after 12 years of racing I finally decided I had the results to actually go out and show my 'stuff' to potential supporters. I'm especially fortunate to have EcoRez Inc (www.ecorez.com) providing me with my major sponsorship. A great partnership between a company that operates from an ecological perspective, doing their part to preserve the environment that I swim, bike and run (and live) in! Thanks to Rick, Kevin and their team for their cheering and support.

The support of an excellent bike store is also essential in getting me mentally prepared for the race – I get so nervous about my bike and last minute checks, so it's awesome to know that Heath, Lorne and Henry are there at LaBicicletta (www.labicicletta.com) to take care of my nerves. I also want to thank the good Drs. Jason and Scott at Sports Performance Centres (www.sportsperformancecentres.com) who kept me healthy and ready to race.

Of course, my coach is instrumental to my performance and Steve Bentley (www.bentleycoaching.com) has been everything I need and expect from a coach and a good friend. Steve – I hope I've been less of a 'challenge' this year!

Finally I can't finish this section without mentioning Tony, who always has to listen to me, and gave me the confidence to know that I could go out and do this again. Maureen, who is THE BEST support person to have around, I can't tell you how much she has helped me.... and all my other friends – I rely on you guys and you know it – those who trained with me – those who talked with me on the phone to give support – those who threw parties (thanks again Kim and Tracy) and the list goes on. You all know who you are.

OK, NOW THE RACE....PREAMBLE

Training this summer was very challenging as I tried to keep up with all the speed demons on those hills around Palgrave, Hockley Valley and out in Oakville. Of course I missed my 'gals' Tracy and Kim – both tending to their baby girls – but had the pleasure of spending time in the saddle accompanied by Chris and Jen Young, Doug, Dave 'Glitter' Ahrens, (occasional) Norm Flemingdon, and Kevin Glass – the guy who thinks he can't ride, but man he can! I'm sure that all those hills, hills and more hills were truly beneficial in preparing me for the 'rollers' in Wisconsin.

I traveled to Wisconsin with my two training buddies Rhys Spencer and Doug Holt. I've known both of these guys since racing with them in 2000 at Ironman Florida. Both Rhys and I were going to Wisconsin with the goal of qualifying for IMHawaii 2005, and Doug was coming back from a 3-year school imposed sabbatical.

After one night on the road we drove into Madison arriving just before noon on Wednesday. A frustrating evening was spent trying to find food - two grocery stores with NO produce or meat (can you believe that). Finally, we made it back to the hotel and had some dinner.

Day two in Madison was more calm and included swimming in dense fog – so much so you couldn't see your hand enter the water in front of you - and running! I also got to try the wonderful Stealth IM Wet Suit thanks to my new friends Ryan and Ian who both work for the company. I decided to not only purchase the wet suit, but used it on race day.

After registering we went out to drive the bike course – OK it was hilly, but it didn't look too bad from the back seat of the van.... I kept thinking, 'if you think it is easy, it's going to come back and bite you in the ass!' The course included a 30k ride out – which was relatively flat, but included a technical city section, complete with bike path and many, many turns – two 60 K loops of hills, hills and hills (and some flats) and then the same 30k path home! I wasn't too worried after seeing the course, but reminded myself that two loops are TWO LOOPS.

Friday, day three, was a rest day. This included waking at 4:30 (for me) being totally board still by 7:30, waiting for the race expo to open at 10:00 – and finally having a chance to kick back and just mosey around the expo. Endless pool was there and we all enjoyed swimming at pace and not moving anywhere. Not much else happened on Friday but starting to prepare the transition bags and watching Football! What else.

Sat morning to sky was clear and we were set for our pre-race prep. A fresh 20 min swim, followed by some pickups on the road (I cycled along a residential street boarding the 'other' lake that Madison surrounds – just beautiful!), and then some running sprints. My legs were feeling particularly heavy but I didn't let it worry me.

The interesting thing at IM Cow is that the transitions are all held inside. I'm sure many of you have seen the coverage and have noticed that the bikes are on a rooftop-parking garage and that the run to the bikes is up a 6-story helix. What you can't see is that at the top of the helix you run inside – through one room that has ALL T1 or T2 transition bags and then into the designated changing areas – you then go back outside and continue your trip to your bike, or out onto the run.

RACE DAY

Race day came and it was HOT! At 4:30 a.m. I went out for the 'get the system moving' run. When I got back to the hotel I was totally soaked. Wow – we were in for some killer heat! The trip to the race site was uneventful – we had decided in advance of where we would park, ensuring that we could get out of the city core while the race was still in progress. Another note about this race – as it is held in 'down town' Madison driving and parking is an essential part of this race – this requires a calm head and pre-planning (unless, of course, you are made of money and can get a hotel down town).

After a smooth trip through the special needs drop (where I saw my good friend and original 'marathon man' from Toronto, Maurice French. His son was racing in his first IM) off and bike check, and then check and re-check of the transition bags... it was off to the water. Unfortunately we had chosen to walk along the lakeside bike path, which coincidentally was walled off from the starting shoot to the lake (including the timing mat we needed to walk over!). In order to get into this area I decided to jump the barriers that were at the end of the wall – nice spectators helped me get a leg over the fence.

Once into the water – this race has a deep water start – the nerves kicked in, at the time I wasn't sure it was nerves, I just knew that I really didn't want to be there, and I was saying I'll never do another one of these if I don't get my Hawaii spot. Then I remembered that this is how I felt before many other races, and decided that it is just my normal reaction to starting a race – difficult way to have nerves like this AND they certainly don't get the adrenaline going!

The swim turned out to be pretty good – a huge field of 2,188 started the double ‘rectangle’. I had a swim ‘companion’ to my right for the majority of the first loop, and part of the first section of the second loop till I got tired of breaking the waves for her and swam over her back and went on the other side. I thought it was about time she had a turn as being squeezed into the corners! Got back into a good rhythm, and finished off the 7th turn to approach the swim exit to see 1hr. slip away from me.

After negotiating the run up the ramp to the wet suit strippers, it was up and off to run up the helix and into the convention centre for T1 and then out onto the bike. The potentially difficult trip out of town went smoothly and before I knew it I was on to the ‘lolly’ part of this lolly-pop shaped course. I rode for about 20 k with the same group of folks including two female pros. The ride was particularly ‘clean’ in that there wasn’t any blatant drafting, and the course was challenging but very manageable at a good pace. I was somewhat concerned when I realized that I started checking my elapsed time at 2:30 onto the bike. Changed the computer to show distance instead of time, and focused on eating and drinking when my watch beeped. Just before the end of the second loop the first woman in my AG caught me! I was surprised how hesitant she was on the corners, and we stayed together for a while till she rode away. I reminded myself to race my own race, and stayed at my own pace.

During the ride I had felt burning in my toes. I was sure that my shoes were not too tight, and I tried to alleviate the burning sensation by wiggling my toes – but to no success.

Other than my burning feet, I felt great getting off the bike (although I almost slipped on the painted concrete) and saw my friend Gillian, who had come from Chicago to watch, as I ran into the changing room. T2 went smoothly and I was out of the convention centre quickly, only to have to turn around and go back in as I forgot my salt tabs and advil.

The first km of the run is through the centre of town - the crowds were great! Hearing my name I turned just in time to see my friends Paul Clarke and Robin McGilp who had driven to Madison (arriving at 2 a.m. and sleeping in their car) to watch the race!! What a great surprise and a wonderful boost! Then I saw coach Steve, and I announced to him that my feet were broken, and I truly thought they were. It was the most pain I’ve ever had. To keep from crying out loud I cheered on those who went by me the other direction including Dave Harju – Canadian and eventual winner of the race!! Woo Hoo.

It was evident to me that I needed to figure out how to get my feet back into working condition, so I decided to walk the aid stations, and then I decided to walk all hills, and then the spasms in my calf started. By the second loop the spasms were worse when I walked so I didn’t know what to do but to try to run more!

This was a challenging run course with many corners, different road surfaces, and a doosie of a hill! With three turn-around points in the loop it was easy to keep track of how your pacing was pro/de-gressing! I knew I was about 90 seconds behind the first place woman in my AG coming out of T2, but by the first turn, on the first loop she was already 3 minutes ahead of me!

As I approached the turn-around at the end of the first loop I gave the ‘thumbs down’ to Paul and Robin (Robin actually thought I was crying as I was approaching them, but it was just so hot that I was holding ice cubes to my eyes). Quickly I decided that this was a ‘suckie’ thing to do, so on the way back out to start the second loop I waved and smiled. On approaching Steve he told me to concentrate on my good training and to stay strong. Steve was there again and to second turn-around half way through the second loop and told me I had 20 minutes on the girl in third place. Welcome news, as this kept me focused on running as much as I could, and keeping the walking to a minimum. I wasn’t running scared, but more running for conviction. I knew I had it in me to be stronger than all the women in my AG and I was determined to keep my second place.

Approaching the finish line I’m not sure what I felt, but I was sure glad that I had kept my second place AND that I saw Paul and Robin in the finishing chute so that I could hand them my hat and jel flask...essential to discard the ‘non-essentials’ for the finish line photo! I crossed that line so quickly I

wanted to go back out and do it again – to prove to myself that I had actually finished this race – it was that tough.

While I and hoped for a 1st place, and certainly a better run and finishing time, I am extremely proud of myself for my mental toughness. I also accomplished my goal of qualifying for IMHawaii 2005, another thing to be proud of. There is a gap though in knowing that I can do better, and wasn't able to do it on the day. You know what, I'll just put that in the race kit for Kona.

Thanks again for all the support – the faxes, the calls, the 'verbal flower bouquet, and the recommendations that I wear diamonds at IM Hawaii (thanks Beth)! And thanks to my Mom, brother and his family who all watched together and were burning up the telephone lines with my sister!

OK – IM Hawaii is on Oct 15th – how big of a house should I rent?