

# Florida Double Anvil

Swim: 2:31:29 Bike: 16:15:28 Run: 16:04:53 Total time: 35:22:48

Angie Wise Race Report February 28 – March 1, 2014



**So**, I've never written a race report that I've shared with others before. Honestly, who would be interested in reading what a middle aged mom would have to share about her training and race day when she doesn't really consider the Double Anvil a "race" in which she is tracking fellow athletes and trying to beat others to the line, but rather an "event" in which she just enjoys the self-discipline and determination it takes to get to the end? When I signed up for the Double, my goal is to finish and I consider it a win if I am able to set a new personal record. Beating others doesn't even enter my head. I mean, seriously, in large races I've set a PR and been beat by hundreds, while at a small race, I had my worst 5K time ever and got a medal. Isn't it really about pushing ourselves to our own limits (and beyond)? I'm just interested in getting myself across the finish line before time is called. If everyone else out there finished before me and I finished last, but improved on my times, I would still be happy. So, again, who wants to read about that kind of athlete?

**Then** it hit me. There are people out there considering a Double, who haven't signed up yet as they aren't quite able to believe that it is possible for them. This will cast away any doubts you may have about what you are possible of accomplishing.

**My** race started in '99. I was working full time and going to graduate school full time, training mostly on weekends. I headed to Virginia where I was determined to finish 281.2 miles. Well, I did, but it took me about 39 hours! An unofficial finish, but one I was proud of accomplishing. I even received an award from a wonderful man, Chet Blanton. He was in Virginia completing a Triple. He stayed awake after his own finish waiting for me to slowly make the distance and presented me with his award, as I wouldn't be getting my own due my "extended finish." That really stuck with me. What sort of person goes out of their way like that for someone they don't even know? It was my first introduction to the ultra family and I loved it. However, marriage and children would keep me from returning to the Double for years. In 2012, I convinced my college roommate, Wendy, and her husband, Jon, (he now calls me "The Virus" due to my ability to infect others with the desire to do things they didn't even know they wanted to do!) to compete in the Double with me as a team, In 2013, she and I both returned as individual competitors. I completed a Double Anvil that year and she completed an Anvil plus, just a few miles short of her goal. On the way to the awards ceremony the next day, I told her that when (not if, but when) she decided she wanted to return to make her own finish official, I would be ready to come crew for her. She immediately said she wanted to return next year (one of the many reasons I like her), but said she wanted me in the race, not as crew.

**And** that's where the 2014 race report starts. You see, I had trained throughout 2013 with the burning desire to make my race official. For 2014, what was my motivation? I was having trouble finding it. I knew I would return to the Double, but, had it not been for Wendy, it would not have been in 2014.

**So,** I signed up for a few races to motivate me, a marathon, a 12 hour race, but I just wasn't feeling it this year. Things got even worse when winter hit. We had a mild winter in Missouri during my 2013 training, but this year, the weather was terrible. Bitterly cold with snow and ice on the roads resulted in mostly indoor training which is just not enjoyable! My longest workouts this winter included being on the trainer for 5 hours and on the treadmill for 26.2 miles, broken up throughout a long day of stopping to do laundry every hour or so. See, I told you. You can do this!

**The** time comes to travel to Florida for the race, feeling really unprepared, so I just decide that this race is not going to be about me. It's going to be about getting Wendy and a few other athletes returning from 2013 to get their own official finish. I just decide that I'll stay on the course as long as Wendy is out there fighting her way to the finish.

### **And the race starts...**

**The Swim:** As a last ditch effort to find some motivation, I had realized that my swim time last year of 2:28 was just about 5 minutes short of bumping someone I am honored to call my friend, Dani Grabol, off of the course record board. If I could swim a 2:22, I would be listed as the third fastest female for the Tampa course. Might give me some motivation to finish, right? Well, after being told by a gentleman in my lane that I needed to head to the other (slow) end of the pool, I did enjoy beating the five men in my lane out of the pool, but ended up with 2:31, slower than last year. No new record. Oh, well, onto the bike.

**The Bike:** No real problems on the bike. Seemed a little windy to me, but after riding the trainer in my basement, the hurricane winds I was feeling were probably just a gentle breeze. Prior to the start, I had reminded myself of the times I feel low during the race. I knew in the late afternoon, when shadows are long across the path, I start to feel tired, just trying to figure out a way to have my legs keep moving while I close my eyes for a nap. I knew to expect this and knew that as soon as darkness falls, the passage of time becomes less noticeable and my energy would return. Though Wendy and I were both here doing this race, since the pool, I had not seen her one time. Finally caught up to her on one of the last laps of the bike. Glad I did because her light was terrible. I was able to finish the bike and give my light (it's absolutely awesome – my husband said the light was so bright that it looked like it belonged on the front of a train) to her. Staying with the idea that this race was not about me, while on the bike, I was praying for Wendy to finish and for others, generally picking a person to pray for each lap. As a Christian, I couldn't let any suffering go to waste, right? Also, it was easier to keep going when thinking about others, as opposed to thinking of myself.

While I prayed for my husband, my children, and those I know experiencing some trials, I will admit this: You have a better chance of having me dedicate a lap to you if your name rhymes with a number, as I also try to keep track of the lap I am on at the moment. If anyone's name rhymes with "teen," please let me know. I come up short with words that rhyme for laps 13 - 19! Last note about the bike, I must say nothing compares to the feeling of seeing a fellow athlete ahead of you on the bike, deciding to reel them in, pushing yourself to pass them, only to realize they are a Florida retiree on a beach cruiser enjoying an afternoon ride around Flatwoods Park. At least I DID actually pass them!

**The Run:** This was the other low point of the race I knew was coming. Running in the dark at 3 am, watching all the head lamps bounce around, feeling extremely tired, this is when it is most tempting to stop, just wanting to sleep. Wendy was going so I kept going, as well. I walked the entire first marathon

as my left ankle kept sort of turning out to the outside with each step. Hard to explain and I'm not sure what was going on, it was almost as if I were walking across a ramp sideways, but I wasn't! Usually, I can keep a pretty good pace walking, but this was slowing me down and quickly becoming annoying. I would even stop and start walking again, trying to concentrate, but it kept turning out.

The sun came up and I expected the usual burst of "new day" energy, but it didn't happen. Became a little confused about 8 am, thinking it was noon, and determined that there was no way I could finish in time walking with this ankle thing happening. Even though I had 5 people telling me I had plenty of time, I decided that I would probably end up with an Anvil Plus and set a goal of completing the swim, bike, and a 50K –that's still ultra distance. Respectable enough, right? Well, I started relaxing a little. Spending more time talking with friends that had come by and even took a short nap.

Then the most amazing thing happened. I had my ankle taped by the great guys at the massage tent, changed into my Hoka's and started the second marathon. I felt absolutely wonderful, the best I had felt since the beginning of the race! I started running some, causing Billy Collier to ask if he was hallucinating. I was able to catch up to Wendy and spend the last 3-4 hours of the race with her. (That is a true test of friendship right there – 24 plus hours with little or no sleep, Wendy with her "George Jefferson" speed walk – see it and you'll know what I mean! - walks faster than I walk, but I was wanting to run more than she was wanting at the time, so finding a common pace was a challenge.) What a perfect ending to the race to cross the finish line together. Of course, at the time, we both thought that meant we didn't have to do this again. Now, a few days later, we're thinking Triple!!

**While** it is fun to note that I had the fastest female swim time (5<sup>th</sup> overall), fastest female bike, and tied for second (female) this year, I am fully aware that these times would be absolutely crushed if aforementioned Dani Grabol or last year's female winner Susan Allen were present, just to name a few. First place or last place just depends on who shows up on race day. Actually, I had no idea about the placement throughout the race. I knew I was the first woman out of the pool, but seeing a couple of the other female athletes moving so well through the bike and the run, I assumed they had passed me long ago. I am so proud of all of the women out there, especially Lisa Vega for finishing the distance, knowing that her finish would be unofficial and past time. Reminded me of myself in '99. So, so proud of her.

**In summary** (finally, I know, I've been wordy!), just get out there and do it. Find a good support crew. (My husband, family, and friends are great. It would be absolutely miserable, if not impossible, to do this event without support). Chat, or at least wave, to fellow athletes. Ultra athletes are a great bunch of people.

**It is possible. You are strong enough. Believe that you can.**