

Odyssey Adventure Racing Double IRON

October 11-12, 2003 by Ed Schultze

The Short Version:

I finished my first Double IRON Sunday October 12, 2003. I swam 4.8 miles, rode my bike 224 miles and ran 52.4 miles in exactly 34 hours. I finished in tenth place out of only 12 finishers, from a field of 18 competitors. It was hard, harder than a 100-mile trail race yet almost everything went as planned.

The Long Version:

I was asked to write this race report up supposedly to give others an idea about completing a Double IRON but I think quite a few also wanted to know why anyone would try such a thing. I do not think I need to address the 'why' part for the ultrarunners. For the others, suffice it to say that my wife occasionally says I must have lost my mind. The answer is probably somewhere between these two concepts: I am an ultrarunner and maybe I have lost my mind.

Anyway, I had originally registered and intended to run an Off Road Ironman distance triathlon in Rifle, Colorado, last summer. The swim was to be in a big river. The biking portion was 112 miles of all trail biking including night biking in the mountains. The marathon was a trail marathon. This was right up my alley. However, the event was cancelled and I shelved my plans to run any triathlons for a while. I used to run triathlons and converted to all running- trail running and ultrarunning several years ago.

Then I saw the ad for the Double IRON. I do not know when I finally admitted to myself that I was interested in attempting the Double but I did register for the event close to a year in advance, sometime during the fall of 2002. I began my preparations that winter and serious training in the spring.

Training:

I am not terribly structured in my training for any special event. I train in generalities. A 100-mile trail race in the mountains may be three months off so if I am not 'up' already, I increase my weekly mileage and try to get out to some mountains or at least make sure I am doing some hill work. However, for a first time event like my first 100 miler or in this case my first Double IRON I do get a little serious. For my first 100 mile race close to five years ago, I trained incredibly hard doing back to back long runs over 30 miles on weekends, frequent solo long runs in the mid forties and weekly mileage in excess of 100 miles. After completing my first 100-mile run (Massanutten) however, in preparation for subsequent 100-mile races, I did not train at that level. Part of my rationale for the hard training for my first was that psychologically I wanted to make sure I could handle the mileage.

Never having done a Double IRON, I also wanted to know how well I could handle the mileage. I knew I had to not only ratchet up my training, but I had to work on sport specific technique. I had to get my mileage up and times down and work on biking techniques and swimming technique. I probably started my swimming and biking training in earnest in mid spring.

Swimming is my least favorite sport mostly because I do not have access to open water swimming and given the distance and time I needed to train, I would be in various public pools endlessly

swimming and counting laps. This is very boring for me. At least in running and biking I can get away with some daydreaming and get to be outdoors. Anyway, I hit the pools, beginning with ½ mile to one-mile workouts, maybe 2-3 times a week. This went very well as I was swimming very relaxed and had no problem at all increasing the mileage. However, I hit two serious snags.

One was I was swimming too relaxed. I told myself that I needed to work on distance and not speed and steadily increased my mileage. However, this turned out to be a tactical error. At my then training pace I would need close to the entire five hours to finish. I was training too slow and like running it is hard to re-train to go faster, but I had to do it.

My second major snag was that I was getting some serious foot-ankle- shin cramping. I tried Succeed (electrolyte supplement) and Quinine (a favorite of competitive long distance swimmers), eating more, eating less, but as soon as I hit the two or three-mile mark, I was having serious cramping problems. I did some research and talked to various swimmers. Bill Van Antwerp, an ultrarunning friend and accomplished Ironman himself suggested that I stop kicking. He said kicking to some extent pulls you backwards anyway, so just stop. It worked. I know this might seem like heresy to some swimmers but I lost no speed but did lose the cramping. I soon got to the point that I was doing 3.5-mile workouts twice a week and then 2-3 two-mile workouts on other days during the week and my speed was improving. Weekly mileage was usually ten to 12 miles. I saw my distance increase and time steadily decrease. I worked on stroke mechanics and stroke speed. I also worked on left and right sided breathing and being able to swim in a straight line and by sighting. (I frequently swam laps with my eyes closed to work on swimming straight.)

Towards the end of my swim training, I went to practice swimming in my wetsuit. My old wetsuit leaks in several places and I had thought that it might be too tight. My first wetsuit swim almost made me panic. I had a hard time breathing, while I was definitely buoyant, I was not swimming faster. I decided to investigate buying or renting a new one. However and thanks to Bonzai Sports I was told my old wetsuit was fine and that I needed to try body glide so that the suit would fit just a bit better. This did the trick. My next wetsuit swim was much better and I was relieved. Swim training did turn out to be rewarding in that I got immediate results. Still, I find swim training boring and often frustrating as I usually lose count of my laps before I reach 20 (and I often needed to count in the hundreds). I am not a great swimmer but got my pace down to 25-minute miles towards the end.

Biking: I am used to biking so all I wanted to work on was distance, gear preparation and maintaining a regular pace.

I started biking in earnest during late spring. I probably started with sub 100-mile weeks, going out 2-3-4 times a week, with a weekly long ride of about 30-40 miles. After a few months, I doubled my weekly mileage and was planning on different fun long rides. However with my son busy planning his first year of College and many other commitments it was hard to get the time in on the bike that I wanted. Part of the problem is that I really like to get away from my neighborhood to ride and therefore I added about two hours to most biking training- an hour to get somewhere a little safer and an hour back.

In the middle of summer, my oldest son suggested we ride bikes to the beach for fun. This was a great experience and helped me get at least one long ride in (160+ miles in about 12-13 hours including stopping at every possible McDonalds along the way). However, I also got biker's knee

because of this ride. I really did some dumb things. I rode my old antique Huffy bike (circa. 1961) full of gear (it had to weigh well over 60 pounds) - so my son could ride the Trek road bike. I was really pushing and to make matters worse I was in the habit of pushing in high gears (lower rpm per mph) - a sure cause of biker's knee. As if that was not enough, I made two more serious mistakes: I did not bother to adjust the Huffy so it would fit me properly and I basically doubled my long mileage in one day. All were sure-fire ways to get biker's knee.

My knee only bothered me while biking so I could run fine. However, I was not terribly interested in working on my running. I took my running for granted. I did keep trying to bike and my knee would have little to do with it. I backed off for a few weeks and found that the knee problem still flared up immediately - I could not get three houses away from home without it feeling sore but it did not seem to get worse as I continued, so I continued. I did several 60-70-80 mile rides and one time rode my wife's exercise bike for 70 miles (talk about boring) to see if that was better on my knee. Finally, about three weeks before the race, I tapered starting with the biking. I backed off except for maybe two to three 30-40 mile trips.

I also worked on some issues of technique - getting comfortable with bike shoes again, getting the bike to fit exactly, getting comfortable using the aero bars and meticulously holding a pace-15MPH was my target so I spent a lot of time forcing myself to maintain this rate for hours. I also was developing a serious hot spot on my left foot. This was due to my compensating with my left leg - pushing more - due to my right knee being sore. I was out of balance but a man on a mission.

I also had to get into a lot of gear issues, the most relevant for those considering doing a Double IRON or riding a bike overnight is lighting. As far as I am concerned, bikers have made a huge mistake following runners in going crazy over LED lighting. LEDs are great for running but even runners know that they are not good for pointing. In other words, using an LED provides a nice, comfortable, diffuse light that lasts many, many times longer than all other lights. However if you are on an unfamiliar trail and need to see 30 yards ahead of you they are of little use. Well, think about biking at night - traveling three times faster than running. You definitely need to scan the surface immediately ahead of the bike (for glass, cracks, debris, etc) and 30-50 yards ahead given the speed. The old discarded Halogen lights are best suited for this. However, none of the bike shops carry them anymore. My first solution was to find a conventional Halogen headlamp and duct tape it onto a helmet. (notice that duct tape found its way into this report). However, I was not satisfied with this arrangement because I wanted lots of light and backups. I finally found two of the old Halogen lighting systems on the bargain clearance rack at Performance Bikes. I bought them both knowing that the batteries only lasted four hours under ideal situations (this may be part of the reason LEDs are popular with some bikers). I figured I could get up to 8 hours since I bought two sets and given my other backups, this would work (and it did and I am so glad I did not get any LEDs). I replaced my shifters, derailleurs and had the bike tuned up. I was ready to go.

As mentioned, I did not worry at all about the running. I continued to run 4 times a week on average with long runs around 20 or so: weekly mileage 40-60, sometimes higher.

I was in good shape. My running had improved due to the cross training. I had lost maybe 10 pounds but that was a good thing in my case. All in all, I was ready. Things were coming together and I needed to try this thing.

The Odyssey Double IRON

The 'Double' was held at Lake Anna State Park near Fredericksburg, Virginia. I checked the website periodically to try to learn all I could about the event. I had little idea of what I was getting into. I did learn over the summer that the swim would be multiple loops close to 30, in the lake - swimming around a buoy line as I call it (large buoys either anchored or connected with ropes). I certainly have done this before but preferred a more conventional open water swim like swimming out towards a buoy a mile or two off and back again.

While swim training I discovered that I got pretty hungry after swimming three miles. I called the Odyssey' folks to see what more I could learn about the swim: for instance was it several laps that included a run into and off of the beach so I could get something to eat. No, it was 30 some laps in the lake but your crew could bring you food and water-, which was common. OK, I knew I could eat now but what and how were still on my mind and I needed a crew. In fact, they are required.

I have run many ultra races and have never had a crew. In fact, only once did I have a pacer (I was asked to) and that turned out to be a joke of sorts (I was paired with one of the fastest ultrarunners in the country so **I** could break **him** in). I like running these events on my own and rarely have seen a real need for personal support such as a crew or pacer. Besides, I sure did not want to impose on anyone given the demands of the Double IRON. Being a crew person for this type of event was so much more than meeting me in the woods a couple times a day to give me fuel and water. Crewing at a Double IRON meant camping at the State Park for two days and having all the supplies and gear I would need for all three events covering over 280 miles.

I asked my oldest son Kevin if he would do it and he quickly agreed. I made sure he knew what he was getting into because he would be missing schoolwork at College (West Virginia University), a weekend of fun with his friends and would be working a lot during the event. He was very willing to come down and help and I really appreciated it. It made the event even all that more special.

About a month before the event, Vicki Kendall sent me Aaron Schwartzbard's race report from 2002. Aaron had crewed for his friend Chris and wrote a detailed report on his experience crewing. I forwarded a copy to Kevin. I found the report very useful. It was also useful to learn that Aaron would be attempting the Double this year as well. As only a handful of people try this event on any given year, it was nice to know that someone else from the Virginia Happy Trails Running Club was trying the same thing. I had never met Aaron but I remembered that at MMT last year he ran a great race, definitely one of the front-runners. Anyway, I had a crew and I knew vaguely that another VHTRC member would be there.

It was not until just about 2-3 weeks before the race that I learned that the run was to be held on an entirely paved surface and worse, was a simple one-mile out and back. Basically, you run on a road a mile, turn around, run back to the start, and do this 26 times, plus a modified lap to get the .4. This combined with what was supposed to be a 7.5-mile bike course repeated 30 times were not my favorite venues. I like trails and long distances for running and when biking strictly long distances with no repeats. Oh well.

Race Day

We arrived at Lake Anna late Friday afternoon and went directly to the staging area. The ‘Triples’ were already out on the bike course. Yes, for some a Double is just a stepping-stone. There are Double Deca-Triathlons (twenty-IRON triathlons completed successively over days). In fact, there is a woman who has competed very successfully at every distance: Double, Triple, Deca (ten) and Double Deca (20). I think her name is Sylvia Andonie or something and she is from Monterey, Mexico. I also learned through a friend that knows her that she completed a Deca-tri in Hawaii put on by her husband that was held in a swimming pool and parking lot of a health club! I guess every sport has its Monica Scholz. I was, and remain extremely impressed with these athletes.

I got to meet all the Odyssey crew that afternoon. They were all very nice, extremely helpful and fun. I registered and got my bike inspected by ‘Top’ a real nice guy. I was very relieved to be officially registered with Chris as even though I pre-registered a year ago, I had forgotten that my doctor had to sign a verification form that I was fit to run the race. It was not until one week before the race that I was reminded that I needed to bring this signed form with me. I was fit in general terms and had a good physical recently but worried that for some reason my doctor might not feel comfortable signing this. While my doctor is a competitive swimmer, she also had to treat me for a blood clot last year following a 100-mile race and I discovered this past year that she has been commiserating with my wife about the folly of man running marathons and the like. My wife came home last year from her annual physical and reported to me that she and the doctor were talking about me (during *her* physical) and that Dr. R. agreed with her that I should not be running all these type of races. Just what I need, my wife and doctor teaming up like this. Thankfully, she did sign the waiver although she added a note that anyone who participated in such events was subject to certain health risks, etc. The Odyssey folks got a little laugh out of that but I was in and was relieved to have cleared that hurdle. I still do not know exactly what I would have done if after a year of preparation and some serious training I could not get medical permission to race.

Kevin and I checked out the course. The main road in was part of the bike course. While it is relatively flat, I knew that after hours and hours, I would quickly discover hills. There is a slight increase as you come in, some gentle decrease and increase for a mile and then a very gradually decrease to the transition area. We could not tell which park road that intersected with the main road would also be part of the bike course. We asked Don the race director who told us that the bike course had to be modified because the other road had been washed out. So, now instead of 30 some 7.5 mile out and backs, we would be completing 45, five-mile out and backs - from the entrance to the transition area and back 45 times, great. Not my favorite type of race but it was easy to put any frustration in its proper place. There was nothing I could do about it and besides the real main issue was: could I do the Double.

We went and checked into our Hotel and scouted out the area for food joints. Being a ways away from Fredericksburg, there were no fast food places, no carryouts or food chains. All we could find for many miles in each direction were gas stations that also were bars, delis, general markets, hunting check ins, etc. and they all closed long before 9:00 at night. This meant I was stuck with my cold cuts and peanut butter and jelly, which is OK but I had hoped that on Saturday night I could at least count on a hot cup of coffee and possibly some variety in my food. Again, it was not hard to put minor adjustments in their proper place.

We went back to the park for the dinner and briefing. Don and his wife Dawn talked about the course and answered all of our questions. I also got to meet Aaron and a handful of the Double competitors that I would share the course with over the next two days. As always, being around an ultra crowd is quite comfortable and I definitely found that evening and throughout the Double that there is a great similarity between the ultratriathlete crowd and the ultrarunner crowd. Half of the draw for me in going to these events is being around like-minded people - athletes that my wife and doctor think are crazy.

We ate a nice pasta meal, watched the sunset at beautiful Lake Anna and headed back to the Hotel. Maybe I am getting too comfortable going to these, but I had little trouble getting to sleep by 10:00.

5:00AM: Kevin and I get up and head over to the park. We dropped off all of the gear at the crew area and then parked down by the Lake where the swim would begin. I had over an hour to get ready and really appreciate having a good amount of time so I can be relaxed and comfortable. Finally, it was 6:30 and I got into my wet suit and went into the water to get adjusted. The water felt warm to me even though it was leaking through my wetsuit in several spots.

I was incredibly relaxed given what I was getting into. I knew I could handle the swim fine. I was in no way even thinking about swimming competitively. I only wanted to make the cut. I wanted to be comfortable knowing I would be pushing myself for the next 30 some hours. As far as I was concerned, the swim should be a relaxing warm up and it would be a mistake to race it. I had never swum more than 3.5 miles and had a great swim doing so for the first time. Everything went right. OK, there were a few minor issues. In order to keep my water goggles water tight, I kept the strap so tight that it gave me a headache and left a rather impressive red line around my head for hours. From the hours of stroking, my upper back and shoulders were sore particularly in one area. Still, I had a great time and I definitely could have completed another two-three miles (Why in the world that thought entered my head right after the swim is concerning). I was probably the second or third slowest swimmer but the hour that I was slower than the other swimmers was no big deal. I wanted to take it easy and did. As far as I was concerned, I was sticking to the plan.

One memory that I will not soon forget was that of Kevin close to sunrise, wading into the lake with his shorts on to bring me water and GU, shivering in waist deep water. What a nice friend my son has become to me, as he is now an adult who lives away from home.

The Bike

While leisurely changing into my bike clothes I was chatting with Peter, a fellow competitor. His eye was red and swollen due to a cracked or defective contact lens. Apparently, contacts and river water do not mix too well. He was a little worried about his race but got it all worked out somehow. It turned out later on that Peter and I biked, ran together off and on a lot, and were pretty well matched.

Anyway, it was around 11:00 and I took off on the bike. What a feeling knowing that you are only starting what will be a 224-mile trek. I mentally broke my bike portion into four parts. The first two quarters would be primarily the daytime portion and I wanted to get to 6:30PM and have completed at least as close to 112 miles as I could. I did constant mental calculations and pressured myself to hold a steady 15 MPH pace. I held my arms tight on the handlebars (which is poor form) and began a very rigid exercise of biking uphill at about 13-16 MPH and down hill about 18-20 or so and making sure I hit each turnaround at exactly 20 minutes (this is 15mph pace). I was a machine

programmed to complete 20-minute laps all day. I had the energy and drive and everything was going fine. This was the work stage and I wanted to get some 'money in the bank'. I had a camelback for just water and Kevin made me a mixture of $\frac{3}{4}$ Amino (a succeed-type drink) and water, and $\frac{1}{4}$ different flavor Gatorade that I drank regularly. Kevin also made me sandwiches, got me snacks and drove to the Exxon market to get cold cut subs (Jerry's and Subway have little to worry about down here for some time to come).

During Saturday afternoon, Jenny Charkoudian, a running friend came down to give me support. She brought an orange and some bananas. It was so nice of her to come. I might not have been the most social I could have been as I only stopped to visit for a brief moment. I did not want to get off my bike at all but I sure did appreciate her coming all the way from Montgomery County, Maryland to visit me.

The plan was working perfectly as one of the course judges commented to me that I was one of the most consistent riders of the day (one also said that without a doubt I had the oldest bike). I believe some of the faster bikers took breaks of various times. I did not.

The spot on my upper back between my shoulders was bothering me but I resisted taking Vitamin I (ibuprofen) all day. I made it to sunset without taking any Ibuprofen, right on schedule and feeling pretty confident in my progress. Still I was not half way done and the real work comes later. In addition, I was beginning to doubt that I could keep the steady pace on the bike going all night. I decided to gear down a little on the uphill section even if it would cost me an hour off the bike section. I knew I needed to relax a bit considering the bigger picture. I also decided to start taking the Ibuprofen as the 'spot' on my neck was now numb and I knew it was not getting better.

After a short while, I was pleasantly surprised to learn that while I had backed off my uphill pace a little and my legs appreciated the relief, I was more than making it up on the flats and downhill while maintaining a higher cadence. Backing off actually allowed me to continue at about the same pace but with what seemed to be less effort. In fact, I have been told by other bikers in the past that I ride in too high gears at too low an RPM. I should be riding at a higher RPM and cadence than I do as opposed to pushing as much as I do. I always learn things the hard way. It is better to ride at a higher rpm rather than push harder through higher gears just as it is better to swim with a faster stroke rather than try to get any glide from stronger, slower strokes.

The bike course is monotonous. I covered the same 2.5 miles 90 times. There are race officials at the two turnarounds that note bikers' number and split times. I called my number out 90 times. Both turnarounds occurred at the bottom of hills meaning that the nice downhill were sort of wasted, as we had to stop to execute a U-turn at the bottom of the hill and then work our way back up the inclines. Also after ten hours or so of biking, making those U-turns could not be taken for granted. (Note: not once did I fall off my bike).

I was surprised to find Jamie Webster working one of the bike turnaround points. Jamie, a very accomplished Adventure Racer- including going on the famous Eco Challenge a few years ago, used to run with a Tuesday night running group that I run with. Jamie has some type of leg injury and was helping officiate the race. He offered me and all the other competitors lots of encouragement and later I found him pacing a runner on a bike to help that runner out. It was nice to see Jamie. He is a good guy even though he has turned to the 'dark side' (adventure racing).

At the most, there were probably 15 to 20 bikers on the course at any one time, at least it seemed that way. At times, some of us chatted with one another but for the most part, we were all working and did not want to expend much energy trying to ride side by side and chat. We all knew that we had a long day ahead of us, we all knew we had to 'run our own race', and even though some chatting would help pass the time, we all kept focused on doing our repeats - holding a certain pace, making mental calculations, planning on logistics and passing the time internally. After a few hours, I was surprised by the rhythm that was established. Despite our different finishing times, passing was really rare. I rode alone most of the time and at every intersection or section of the course, I would recognize a particular bike at essentially the same spot as I did at the last pass, meaning we were all close to holding a relative constant group pace.

Riding at night was fine. I had gotten pretty used to the course and the surface, all the turns, ups and downs, and little rough spots. The surface of this park road was not ideal. It was asphalt but not the smooth asphalt that is most common. Rather, this asphalt was rough - almost rough enough to provide traction for cars if that was the intent. However, for biking this is a factor. You ride slower on this type of rough surface. It is not as bad as a highway that has been ground prior to its getting resurfacing but it is similar. You feel constant vibration and absolutely gain friction. I kept my tires at 100 pounds but they felt like they were at 30. I was thinking of going up to 120 or even 130 but worried about possible blowouts. Anyway, I got used to it but would have preferred smoother surface. (note from Steve Kirby dtd Jan 2005 - the edges of the road have been repaved and are not as rough as in this report - this edge repaving did about 3 ft on both sides of the road)

My lighting worked out perfectly. I did have to be very conservative about using the lighting though. I rode into the darkness long before using my lights. I knew I had only 8 hours tops and this was under absolutely perfect conditions. Then after around 7:00 or so I started just turning my light on when I heard a car coming so they would see me. However, the race officials had made a big point of us turning our lights on before this so I started using my front light full time prior to 8:00 PM. I am not sure exactly when the battery went dead maybe around 10:00 or 11:00 or so. However, I do remember that when I changed batteries I told myself I needed more than the four hours and would have to find a way to conserve. This was not a problem as I had a backup light mounted to the handlebars already and had a helmet light that I had not even used yet. In addition, gas torches lined the bike course that were lit around 7:00 to 9:00, I think. However, I was watching the truck that was going around lighting the lanterns. Instead of torch oil they had a 5-gallon can of good old Kerosene (sure is cheaper). This was interesting to me because I used to have the same type of Kiwi torches and the special oil sure costs more than kerosene. However, I guess I got a free lesson that day. Do not use Kerosene in place of torch oil if you have Kiwi torches. In this case, the instructions should be followed. Following the truck, it soon became apparent that the real nice and pretty blazes that lined the bike course were just a bit brighter than they should have been. Upon closer inspection for many of the torches, the entire torch was blazing on fire some to the point that they were melting and the ground around the base of torch was circled in a ring of fire- a pool of Kerosene about 2-3 feet in diameter sometimes. Several of us mentioned to the torch lighters that some of the torches were on fire and they commented that maybe the torches were just old and continued to light them. On my second or third pass, I noticed groups of volunteers and stopped cars at times putting out the fires. Later we got to see the burnt remnants of a few torches. Still, some did work. My advice to you if you want these torches and want to save money- only a few of those with Kerosene did not burn to pieces. However when they were burning it was awful pretty riding up and down the road among them.

During the biking portion, I refused to stop at all. I doubt I got off my bike for more than ten minutes total over 16 hours. I remember thinking that all of us out there were just like hyperactive rats running back and forth from corner to corner of our rat cages.

At one point, I encouraged Kevin to go to sleep for a while. During this time, I got my own food and water. The only time I sat down was to put duct tape on the huge blister covering 90% of my left foot. Other bikers I believe took much longer breaks including little naps. They were for the most part faster bikers than me but I kept going like a machine. I may not be as fast but I sure can be as hardheaded, stubborn and determined as anyone else.

I finished the bike portion around a little before 4:00 AM - extremely close to my goal time. While I was happy to get off the bike, I remember thinking to myself that I sure could have ridden on. Why I was thinking that is quite an issue, but I was not wasted, too sore or too tired to transition without any down time to the supposed run.

I always chuckle a little when I think of a run as a run after 50 some miles in an ultra or after something like this. After doing what I did, I knew I would be walking, walk-running and even some real running but nothing like my 'normal' running. I would be lucky to run a ten-minute mile.

I walked the first out and back which was simply .4 to get this out of the way. I then walked the uphill section of the first mile out, ran a little downhill - gently and then walked back up, and gently and slowly ran down. This felt OK and I did not want to push it too much. So I did the same thing either once more or twice more. I knew I was comfortable - relatively speaking but also wanted to finish this thing and make the cuts. Therefore, I had to start running in earnest even if slow. I next found that I was able to run pretty much 80% of the out and back and did this for about eight times (I had 26 total out and backs to complete).

My left foot had a huge blister. I tried to run on the grass next to the road, which I believed would be softer but found out that every time I stepped on a rock or even a twig or tuned my foot just a little in a little rut that the blister was being pulled and cut. I had to return to the paved surface where at least I could try to get away with a lot of shuffling and the impact on my tender foot would be steady. I had a plan and knew I could finish this thing.

It was good to be off the bike and on my final segment. I chatted with some of my fellow runners and did not mind the short out and back - which at the time sure seemed longer than one mile. It was dark and I was looking forward to daybreak. I always feel a little more refreshed at daybreak and get a little 'second wind'. I tend to run ultra events in cycles. The first daytime portion or first half approximately, I am pushing pretty good - not all out but probably pushing the most. After it gets dark, I typically slow down and consequently the nighttime becomes a period of recovery. When daybreak arrives, I get back to work. I expected this to happen as daybreak was approaching so I was looking forward to a pick me up and was tired and sick of eating GU and cookies which I had all night (big pocketfuls of gingersnaps).

Then I get a great surprise. As I am running or walking down the road, I see two men in yellow jackets headed my way. I could tell that they were happy as they were chatting and laughing as they approached me. I soon discovered that it was John Schwabe and Jim Cavanaugh, two very good friends who said they might come down to watch. They had McDonalds' pancakes with them. It was great to see them, they wanted to hang out, and 'run' with me which was great. I only ate one

of the pancakes, as I was just not in the mood for any more bread or sweet type foods (what an ingrate I can be). Anyway, it was great to have John and Jim around. They livened things up and within an hour, I think everyone on the course knew John and Jim and likewise they knew everyone. They hung around for quite a while and I sure did appreciate it.

I had many guests that day as my wife and youngest son surprised me and drove all the way down to visit. It was so nice of them to do that especially since it was not close to home and with three boys, we always have a lot going on on the weekends. I am a lucky man.

Throughout the run, we all chatted with one another. A special highlight was learning that a particular competitor was nearing his or her final loop. I remember as Mike, a British Marine, who was in good spirits all day neared his final two to three laps. His wife who was many months pregnant not only came with him, was running with another woman for fun but accompanied Mike on several of his out and backs. Mike is a great guy and great athlete. Mike finished third overall.

Some of the international athletes did not speak English completely. Nevertheless, we managed to chat as well. I learned from one fellow I believe an Italian, that the airlines had not shipped his triathlon bike and he was stuck using a rental bike for this race!

Steve Bozeman was the oldest competitor- I was the second oldest. Steve who is from Lynchburg, Virginia holds the record for the most Doubles completed in North America. Throughout the entire event, Steve was upbeat, strong and absolutely determined. At the end, he completed his victory lap with a few friends carrying the U.S. Flag, a Marine Corp Flag and a POW banner a few laps ahead of me. We spent a lot of time joking back and forth. Steve finished in 8th place.

Aaron finished in second place overall and in great form. I was not surprised to see him all cleaned up sometime midday Sunday, but he looked as if he had just come down to watch - not like someone who had just finished a Double. I imagine that if he stays with running 100s he will be quite a competitor in our area.

I do not know all the other competitor's names but will not forget them. Those that finished the Triple were really amazing. It was such a site to see them running - actually running - really running in the middle of the night after biking 336 miles. They were all beat and there was no hiding it, but they were so absolutely determined that I had no doubt they would finish.

Jenny came back on Sunday also to see me finish. She is so nice and considerate.

Finally, at exactly 5:00 I reached the finish line. Kevin and Jenny were there and after crossing the finish line I laid on the grass for maybe ten minutes. I did not need anything but just enjoyed the time off my feet.

There was an award ceremony scheduled for 7:00. However we learned that it was running late and Kevin and I had planned on going home that night - a two hour drive minimum not including the food stops I would want to make. We hung around an hour so I could watch Peter and Don come in. They are great guys and am so happy they both finished and in such good spirits.

While there is much more I could report that occurred over these 34 hours, I will wind down here.

Lessons Learned (maybe)

1. In training, it is important to build up slowly and steadily. Getting biker's knee was avoidable; I should know better and it could have prevented me from completing the Double.
2. You do not have to kick when you swim. All these years I have been wasting a lot of energy kicking.
3. Try everything you can in training. Had I not worked out even the smallest bugs such as my wetsuit fit and getting the right pair of goggles - I might not have finished.
4. While courses do make a difference, in my experience and at longer distances the real test has much more to do with internal issues. In the end, not having my favorite ideal course was not much of an issue.
5. Relatedly and a lesson I keep close to the heart: the real limits tend to be those that are internal. I believed I could do this thing even though the closest I have ever done before was ½ the distance, a single Ironman.
6. A really great aspect of ultra triathlon events just like ultrarunning events is the camaraderie among the competitors: like-minded people, competitive but largely competing with themselves, this group really supports one another.
7. Gearing down on the bike while increasing my cadence, (meant to save me some energy while worrying me that I would endanger my finish), helped in two ways. I did end up using maybe a little less energy, getting a little bit of a break and I was maintaining the same average speed.

High Points:

1. Having Kevin come and help me. I appreciated this long before he actually came down to help. Kevin is now a grown young man who makes all his own decisions. So, his deciding to give up what amounted to four days just to help me, not to mention give up football (playing and watching), having fun with his friends, television, even school work since he had to make it up really meant a lot to me. Having him there helping me and seeing me from the beginning to the end was great.
2. Having my wife and Joe my youngest come down was great as well. Shelley and the kids used to come watch when I did triathlons maybe ten years ago. It was not that much fun for them and I did not need them to be there. I discouraged them from coming quite a while ago and over the past ten years or so I simply went to 'my little races' solo. It was better this way but it sure is nice that they still want to come around and now that all of us are getting older, Shelley and I plan to make some of 'my little races' into 'little mini-vacations' for the two of us. We may try to go some place out of the area twice a year. We may go to California next year while I do the Big Sur Trail Marathon.
3. Having John, Jim and Jenny come down to help me and keep me company. I do not know how I can pay them back and sure appreciated their company.
4. Sharing the adventure with all the other athletes. They are all such very nice and pleasant people.
5. Others told me about a particularly impressive competitor. I had seen Mike on the bike throughout the day really bundled up when all I had on was a Tee shirt. I later learned the story behind this. This youngest competitor was a 23 year old in the Navy. For some

reason this young man had some airplane and scheduling difficulties but ended up starting the Double with little to no sleep for the past two days. He was pulled from the swim due to hyperthermia after about an hour of swimming. However, after a couple of hours wrapped up in some type of special wrap he recovered and wanted to run the race unofficially. He was out and anything he did would not count, but he wanted to do the bike and run course. Well, late and unofficially he got on his bike and biked all afternoon, into the night and the next morning. He joined us all on the run course and ran all day. When I was near finishing he had something like 15 or 18 miles to go and only two hours to do it in. He was not stopping. I found out later that he ran on even as the course officially closed and everyone left. He stayed with his aunt and uncle in the park in the dark and finished the run portion. Whatever this young man gets into later in life, beware, because he definitely has what it takes.

6. The feeling of accomplishment. It is hard to describe fully how good it feels to be completely drained and exhausted knowing that you pushed yourself real hard. It is kind of a clean pure feeling in a way - although I was a real sweaty mess for 34 hours. It is also very satisfying to be able to stretch yourself further as life goes on as opposed to the opposite, which is also a part of life.

I do believe sincerely that I could do a Triple but I am not ready to jump on that just yet.

Ed Schultze, 10/29/03

For more information on the Double IRON or Triple IRON Triathlon – please visit www.USAUltraTri.com, email Steve Kirby at steve@USAUltraTri.com or call (757) 430-8021.