

Virginia Double IRON

2006-10-07

Lake Anna State Park, Virginia

United States

Race Director: Steve Kirby

55F / 13C

Precipitation

**Triathlon - Other**

**Total Time** = 31h 13m

**Overall Rank** = 4/20

**Age Group** = Women

**Age Group Rank** = 1/4

Pre-race routine:

Race Report Format

So here we meet again...race report time. Oh how I loath writing these things, but I fear being hunted down by the BT (Beginner Triathlete) community and to be honest, I like having a record of how I did and what my feelings were at the time so that I can look back later at what I did. I think it goes without saying that this will be lengthy. However, it shouldn't be too long as most would expect because while it's a long race, it's mainly all about: JUST KEEP MOVING FORWARD! I'll break it up in 'chapters' to try to keep it simple and of course there is always the cliff notes version to the right. I won't go into my drive to the race and back home, but I will say it was a gorgeous drive and went by much faster than I expected. I'm sure I'll forget stuff, it's a lot to keep together in my head, so I may have to edit as I think of things, but hopefully you will get an overall sense of how this race went. If you have any other questions about the race, feel free to PM me.

Chapter 1: Entering snowy monsoon territory

Okay, so it wasn't exactly snowing...and alright so it wasn't a monsoon either, but holy cow you take a Texas chick who leaves Longview in sunny 94 degree weather and then several hours later dump her out in Virginia where my car was reading 49 degrees and it's a steady rain, it was a little bit of a culture shock. I arrived at the state park on that Friday a little before 2 pm. I checked into the park office to get the keys to our cabin. We had decided to stay in a cabin in the state park since it would be close and we wouldn't have to drive to a hotel and if we needed something out of it during the race, it would be nearby. As I was driving into the park I see a couple of the Triple IRON guys cycling along. They looked absolutely miserable out there in the wind, rain, and cold. I just kept praying that it would stop by Saturday morning. I drive to the cabin which is little ways off from the actual race course. I carry some stuff inside and look around. For just a state park cabin, they were pretty nice: two bedroom, bathroom, hardwood floors, fireplace, nice size kitchen with new appliances, etc. Actually, these cabins were just completed in 2005 I believe so they were pretty new. I go to grab something else out of my car and walk back and that's when I discover that the door automatically locks behind you and both keys were in the cabin. Fabulous! I've been here 5 minutes and already managed to make a big goober of myself. So, drive back to the park office, get a spare key, open the door, and then drive back to the park office to give them their key back. Alrighty then, so now I decided to go check out transition and see if I needed to check in or anything. I drive to the transition area and get out of my car and watch for a little bit. No one is saying a word and it seems to take forever for them to do one lap. I'm not used to being on the 'watching' end of things. When I'm doing it, it seems to go so fast. I watched them put a space blanket on one guy and drive a van up to transition for him to sit in because he was getting too cold. Anyway, since everyone seemed to be in a zone and there was no point standing out in the rain and cold, I decided to head back up to the cabin until the pre-race dinner and meeting. Back at the cabin, I was kind of like, 'now what.' I checked to see if I could get internet...nope. No TV. I read the cabin journal and learned about 'Grady' the lizard that lives in a hole in the side of the cabin along with other stories from past guests. So that took all of 20 min. Now what? I was just too antsy and couldn't concentrate on anything. I finally decided to lay down for a little bit. Just as I was about to fall asleep my secretary called me, which was nice to have someone to talk to. I told her about how I was freaking over the weather and well, I was a little worried about the distance too :) After talking with her, it was starting to get close to pre-race dinner time. I was so anxious about meeting the other athletes, meeting Brett, everything. Brett finally called, it was the first time I heard his voice. He was almost there and would be there in time for the dinner. Good, he's still coming...I couldn't help but have this bad feeling in the back of my mind that he would ditch at the last second. After meeting him, I feel horrible for even thinking that. 5:45 pm finally rolled around and I decided to head over to the snack bar area at the beach where the pre-race

dinner was to be held.

Chapter 2: How many 'Regular' irons have YOU done?

I drove back through the race course...in the rain...Friday it NEVER stopped raining. I parked my car and just had the biggest butterflies in my stomach. I've got to do something about this pre-race anxiety that I get before every race! I mean, this was just meeting the other athletes, the race wasn't starting yet. I walk down to the snack bar and around to the other side, and there they were. The hoss athletes! Well, just a few of them, people slowly drifted to the dinner. My eyes quickly zoomed in on Suzy Degazon. I knew just about every athlete from their picture on the race site and where they were from, but Suzy...I knew ALL about her. She has the record number of finishes for the Ultraman race in Hawaii (a three day race of swim, bike, run). She's done Doubles before, blah blah, to get to the point, she is THE hoss. I was immediately taken aback though at her extreme kindness. I don't know what I expected, I mean I don't think I thought she would be super stuck up or anything, but she was just one of us, goofing around, and having a good time. I would later come to find out that she is one of the sweetest and cutest people I have ever met, so nice it's sickening, lol. Anyway, the meal was outside, they just shoved the tables up under the building overhang so that we weren't in the rain. I grabbed some pasta, bread, and tea and sat down. I mainly just listened to everyone else. The big topics of course were: the cold weather and the 'flat' course. Everyone had come from warmer weather, even the Canadians. Speaking of the Canadians, I got to meet James (LeCrac) and he was super nice. He was there to crew for his coach Michel who was doing the Double as well. Michel's girlfriend was out there to do a single IRON for 'training'. Frank from California said that you can never count on the weather, and he was right. I wasn't happy about the weather, but for some reason I do okay in inclement weather. My mind just kinda goes into macho attitude: You stupid weather, you're not going to bring me down. I feed on others negativity toward it and it only makes me want to try harder. So like I said, the other topic was the course. None of us saw it as flat. Of course, after driving through the Appalachian mountains to get to the race site, yes, I guess that would be flat in comparison. It wasn't bad (see course description for more details), but it was more incline than I expected. We were all talking about where we came from and how we got there. Suzy asked where I was from and I told her Texas and of course she asked me if I knew Shanna Armstrong (RAAM finisher and several time finisher of Ultraman). I said yes. Suzy said I didn't seem like I was from Texas because I was so quiet. Apparently, most Texans make a loud impression :) Next topic: races. Everyone was determining who were the newbies and who were the veterans and what races we had all done in the past. It quickly became evident that I was Queen Newbie. So they asked, how many 'regular' Irons have you done? The question just made me laugh. They wrote off Ironman as if it were some 5k training run. Okay, I don't know about any of y'all but Ironman was a HUGE deal for me. That was a life goal for me. Ironman was a 'I have to do this' deal in life. I wasn't going to quit until I completed it...luckily I got it on the first try. This Double was simply, 'can I do it?' type of deal. So I told them just the one back in April. They kind of just said, 'Oh...well, you'll be alright.'" Gee, don't sound too confident or anything people. What am I getting myself into?? Suzy assured me that going in blind is the best way to go because you don't know what you are getting yourself into. She said, "See you're just ignorant, the rest of us, we're stupid." Okay, you see...that's really not easing my mind any here. Anyway, so I got to hear about everyone's many 'regular' Irons and which ones they did and who had qualified for Kona before, blah blah. I'm sorry but a sprint is still a big deal to me. Look at the average population and tell me just how many people could go out and swim/bike/run any distance. I guess it's all just perspective though and they were unintentionally making me feel the size of an ant...but in a most sincere nice way as possible :) Oh, and during all of the chit-chat, I of course managed to spill my tea all over the table and spill spaghetti sauce down my jacket...goober moment #2...I'm racking 'em up quick.

Brett finally showed up to the dinner and introduced himself to me. Wow! I could FINALLY put a face to the name. Just by meeting him, I knew we would get along fine. Like I said earlier, you just never really know a person solely on their Internet presence so I was relieved that he had a great sense of humor and was extremely laid back. He was making me a little nervous about the length of time it took him to change a clincher flat. :) Luckily my main wheels were tubulars. I think several people found it odd that we had never raced or crewed at a race like this before and we had never met before and didn't even come from the same state. Eh, it all worked out in the end I think. Perhaps, it's true, ignorance is bliss. Besides, it was either have him who wanted to come crew for me or get a 'rent-a-crew person' from the race.

The race director finally got around to the pre-race meeting and briefly went over how it would work, introduced the doctor, photographer, and the massage therapist. You could tell that the race was laid back and he even mentioned that the race would probably get off to a late start. Fine by me. Afterwards, I signed in and got my goody bag with all kinds of stuff. Frank from California brought T-shirts for everyone that said TeaForce on them. He owns a tea company and was going to bring us samples as well, but there was a mix-up in the shipment. Cool! If anyone knows me, they know that I am the BIGGEST fan of tea since I gave up soda several years ago. We got to choose what color cap we wanted. They had two of several colors and that would be how they would tell us apart. I was so excited to be able to get a green cap! It's like the only color I don't have yet in swim caps, plus it's green! Who doesn't like green?! We were finally released to go and several people already had their bikes and stuff out going through them and already had transition area set up. I hadn't done anything!

### Chapter 3: Ha ha ha ha ha

So, I decided to set my tent up that night so that we wouldn't have to worry about doing it in the morning so we drive my car up to transition and pick out a spot. It is pitch black, and have I mentioned that it was raining? We pull out the tent and begin the crazy task of setting it up. I was laughing uncontrollably. I don't know why. I think that's my way of dealing with the absolute ridiculous. Here I was out in the cold, dark rain attempting to set up a tent for a 36 hour race that I would start in the morning. Do what?! The people next to us asked if I was okay. Yeah, sure...I love staring death in the eye. We finally get it up and chunk my stuff in there...water, cooler, food, bike box, medical box, chairs, etc. We call it good and head to the cabin. I should have gone to bed when I got there, but I just couldn't. I was too fired up. So Brett and I sat up talking awhile and going over our race strategy. I think he was even taking notes in his crew book I made him, hee hee. I have never felt so disorganized for a race before, yet I didn't really want to do anything about it either. Brett and I could already make a list of things we shoulda brought. I didn't even bring a sleeping bag or pillow! I guess I got so caught up in thinking about what to bring to RACE that I didn't think too much about the resting part. We decided we would just yank blankets and towels from the cabin if we needed to (just a heads up...we needed too!). I finally decided to force myself to go take a shower and go to bed. We had decided on getting up at 5 am.

### Event warmup:

### Chapter 4: Don't forget...

Well, I said we would get up at 5 am, but I started worrying about getting everything ready in time so I got up at 4 am. When I had packed I just threw stuff into duffle bags. So I tried to gather all race clothes into one bag and make a transition bag for swim to bike and one for bike to run. All that took less than 30 min. so I laid down for another 30 min. and then it was time to get up for real. Brett got up with no complaining. Stupid me realized that I put ALL of my food in the tent so I couldn't eat a Powerbar yet (totally forgot to eat one at all), so I just snacked on the trail mix I had in the cabin. Not exactly your normal pre-race meal. My mind was just racing with all of the things that I needed to remember to do before the race started and I would try to tell Brett random things to remember. I really really hate being so disorganized, especially for a race of this magnitude. I was scared to go look at the tent because I was concerned that it had blown down in the night because all I could hear all night was the rain and wind. It was time to stop stalling though, it was time to go get ready to get this thing started.

### Chapter 5: Tent...or above ground pool?

We drove separately down to the transition area since Brett had his bike and stuff in his car and he planned to ride some with me. I pull up to my tent and it's still standing! Hooray!! Wait...something's not right...what is it...something is missing. What's missing? My rain fly! It had blown off during the night and EVERYTHING in my tent is SOAKING wet, we're talking standing water in there. Cue nervous laughter again. It's okay, stay calm, stay calm. I pull the rain fly back on and Brett gets there and is like, oh, it's no problem, I'll get it all dried up. Everything's okay. It was lightly raining at the time and my temperature gauge in my car said it was 45 degrees. We filled up my water bottles for the swim and bike start and filled my gel flasks. We tried to leave my car up there, but the race officials said we had to park it down in the parking lot. But it's the only dry thing I own!! I'm so glad that I didn't have my clothes in the tent overnight.

### Chapter 6: The waiting game

So after leaving the tent we drove down to the snack bar area to get my bike out and get 'transition' set up. WE had my bike out, tires pumped up and bags ready to go and it was only a little after 6 am. Hmm, I guess we didn't need to get up so early, oops! But y'all know me, the anal engineer can't risk being late or rushed. So we sat and sat as people started making there way to the snack bar. The race director handed me 4 messages that I had already received via e-mail (thanks Lindsay, Mrs. Winn, Terri, and Joni!). It was nice, but in a way it kind of freaked me out too...oh yeah, all these people are expecting me to finish, what if I don't? How do I face them? Anyway, the other women finally showed up and I saw them carrying their stuff into the bathroom so I decided to take my stuff in there too. The bathroom was like a dressing room with lockers, benches and showers. It was nice only having 4 women because we all just kind of took a bench and laid out our stuff for transition and then sat our bikes right outside the bathroom door. I decided it was time to do the wetsuit wriggle so I lubed up with BodyGlide and got it on. It felt great and I think I got my cord situated to where it won't bug me during the swim. I go back outside and the rain has stopped, but it feels so cold to me, my feet are numb. It's getting close to 7 am, but you can tell that the race is definitely not going to start at 7 am as advertised. Suzy asks ME to zip her up. You want me to do it?? So I get her zipped up in her wetsuit and then she says, "Come, take picture with me." Why do you want a picture with ME in it?! Crazy! Anyway, so finally the athletes wind down to the beach. We introduce ourselves to the timers so that they know what we look like. Then it was time for the obligatory pre-race photo. For some reason the Race Director chunked the American flag at me to hold in the picture. After that I went to feel the water and it felt SO good, it was of course warmer than air temp so by that time I was ready to get moving because I was freezing. We waded into the water and line up at the pole. This is it, no turning back now.

## Swim

Chapter 7: You know the routine, get going

The swim doesn't start off with any big cannon or even a little gun bang. It was more like, alright, y'all can go now. I started in the back and let everyone else in front of me go since I was so slow. My goal was to swim it in 3-3.5 hours. Oh, and the nutrition plan was to break every 4 laps (4/5 of a mile) to take in some water and gel. As we take off, we are in basically one big pack. Gee, do we all swim at the exact same speed?? It was kind of ridiculous, I was getting beat up as much as I did in IMAZ and this is 20 people as opposed to 2200 people. I stayed calm though and knew that we would eventually get spread out. In the beginning, everyone kept walking around the poles and that kind of aggravated me because I felt like I could move around them faster if I were swimming. I came around lap one and thought, alrighty, I can do that another 23 times. The first 3 or 4 laps though I just kept finding myself behind 3-4 guys that were going just slightly slower than I wanted to go, yet I couldn't seem to get around them. I was happy though that I was keeping up with Suzy. She said she was a slow swimmer though and swam 35 min. miles which is about what I swim...guess she wasn't lying. Anyway, dealing with the getting knocked around and having to shorten my stroke so that I wouldn't run into people was getting old real quick. When Steve Bozeman kicked me in the chin so hard, that was the last straw!! He didn't mean to and he said he was sorry and it was my fault for swimming up on him, but I could take it. I just started flailing and kicking like crazy. We got to the outbound pole and I was just thrashing away. Three guys literally stood up and looked at each other like, "Whoa! We better get out of her way!" I felt bad, but I HAD to get out of there. After that it was smooth sailing. Ahhh, much better. Oh, the pathetic part I forgot to mention on my second lap...I got lapped!!! I was freakin' lapped in TWO laps! Oh my goodness!! I thought a boat was going by me. That guy was cruising and he finished the swim in under 2 hours. It's all good though...cause I beat him in the end! Sucker!! Okay, enough gloating on that one. Anyway, back to swimming. I apparently can't swim a straight line, even when I literally have a line to follow all the way down and back. I was either making out with the rope or trying to swim out to sea. I don't get it. So that was kind of annoying because if I could swim straight, I probably could have saved a few minutes. I came around in 4 laps and looked to see if I could see Brett...no Brett, alright well I'll keep going. 5th lap goes by, no Brett, 6th lap goes by, no Brett. I think he was waiting for me to stand up and call him out while I was thinking he would be out there waiting for me every 4. I really didn't need to stop that early anyway though, I felt fine and I hadn't seen anyone else stop yet. Finally on my 7th lap he's out there and hands me my gel and water. I quickly take a swig of each and he says he'll be out there in another 5 unless I need him sooner, in which case, just raise my hand. Cool, works for me. So the laps continue to tick by, it was weird but I couldn't keep track of what lap I was on. I ALWAYS know where I'm at, but when I stopped at 12 to get more water and gel and Brett said I had done 12 and was halfway, I almost

couldn't believe it. I swam an Ironman swim and it felt like nothing. You could have told me I had only done 8 laps and I would have believed you. I'm glad Brett was keeping up with my laps though...see, the crew book WAS a good idea :) The time keepers had shorted me one, but Brett got it all straightened out for me, whew! I really can't think of much else to explain in this, I would pass a person here and there as I would get passed by someone here and there as well. I grabbed water at lap 17 and then we decided to do another water/gel at lap 21, then it would just be 3 laps to the finish. In my last three laps I lapped Suzy!! Oh my goodness, how'd I do that?? In the end, I came out of the water feeling great. I didn't feel tired at all and it SO did NOT feel like I swam 4.8 miles...of course, I know I'm slow and perhaps I should have tried to swim harder rather than going my relaxed pace, but I was happy with it. I felt better in this swim than I did in any of my long training swims out at Lake O' the Pines. But perhaps the fact that I was getting to swim in actual wetsuit legal water in cool air rather than swimming in 85 degree water in a wetsuit on a 100 degree day had something to do with it. I could tell though that my left arm is weaker than my right arm...as to be expected since it's still got 'parts' in it from shattering my left elbow, because I was really starting to hug the buoy line in the end (on our right).

#### Chapter 8: Be bold

Normally, I am such a slow swimmer and hate getting in people's way, but this time I think I should have started more towards the front and let a few people swim over me if they had to. Not that it was that big of a deal since it's such a long swim and we eventually stopped groping each other. Then of course there is always the 'learn how to freakin' swim' thing...that might be good. Perhaps if I had an ounce of technique I could do a little better. However, I'm not dogging myself on my swim today because my goal was 3-3.5 hours and not be last in the water. I met both of those, in fact, I finished in the top half. Go me!! And let's not forget that I lapped super hoss chick AND was the first female out of the water.

Oh, and just a little FYI for those who might want to do this race in the future. Brett said that not very many crew people waded into the water to bring stuff to their athletes, rather they just slung stuff out to them from shore. So, whatever works best...I prefer the nice approach of someone coming out there rather than playing dodgeball with my water bottle, but whatever.

My thank you section: (Oh and all of these, it goes without saying BIG thanks to Brett, if I don't mention him, know that I'm praising him BIG time!). Thanks to Jon for enduring extreme boredom out in your kayak at Lake O' the Pines by paddling (drifting) in front of me and handing me water/gel so that I could actually swim somewhere rather than swim the swim area buoy line and not get mowed over by a boat. I was confident after those swims that I could survive this one. Thanks to Eric the Longview Swim Club coach for the occasional "What the hell are you doing?" comments as I was attempting some drill and then correcting me so that I didn't look like a complete idiot in the pool.

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#### Chapter 9: Chatty Cathy

I ain't in no hurry! I casually walked out of the water and walked up the beach to the bathrooms with Brett. I told him I felt bad for walking, but who cares...I had a long way to go and I had lots of running to look forward to later on. He told me that I was the first female out of the water and that Suzy was about 10 min. behind me. I walked into the bathroom and took my wetsuit and swimsuit off and began putting on my bike gear. No need to worry about sunblock at least :) As I was in there another woman came in who was volunteering at the race. This lady was an absolute sweetheart, but boy could she talk :) Her name was Debbie and I would see her later in the race. She has quite the inspirational story herself...she's in her early 40's and took up triathlon to lose weight...she's lost 75 lbs so far and did IMFL last year, finishing in 16:40 and is going back again this year. She's going to attempt to do the Double next year. Anyway, she was so excited about 'some' guy out there who had this race book with all this neat stuff in it. I told her that it must have been my crew guy and that I made the crew book for a go-by since we had never done the race before/nor ever met. So she was impressed about that. She even took my wetsuit and swimsuit out to him, lol. I decided I would start out the bike in socks, shorts, short-sleeve jersey, and my rain jacket, oh and my short-fingered gloves. While it was in the 50's, I tend to warm up a lot when working out. Besides, I could always add more layers later if I wasn't warm enough. I gathered up my things and headed outside where Brett was already holding my bike for me, ready to go. I step out from under the awning and I'm like,

what is this? It was starting to drizzle. Ugh, guess I won't get a dry day after all, but perhaps this will be the worst it gets. I hand Brett my things (including my glasses since those obviously wouldn't stay dry right now) and head down the sidewalk and up the hill to transition to check in and start the bike section.

Chapter 10: It's not about transition Eh, nothing really. I wasn't in a hurry here. I just wanted to make sure I started off dry and with everything I needed.

Bike

Chapter 11: IT'S BICICLETA TIME!!!! (To the tune of peanut butter jelly time :) )

Ahh yes, the bestest part of the race has arrived! :) I eased up the hill to transition and shouted out my number (#33 for anyone who needs to know) and I was off. Okay, so perhaps I kinda sorta took the first lap a little fast. Hey, I've got lots of laps to slow down on. I did use my little ring to climb up the hill, as I would every single time climbing that hill. I just get anxious when I know people are already on the next section and I want to be there too. Plus, now I was the huntee rather than the hunter and I HATE that position. It was only a matter of time before Suzy caught me...and perhaps the other two as well, I knew absolutely nothing about them. I finished my first lap and Brett said to tone it down a little. I was borrowing some HED 3 wheels from a friend in the bike club and did not have a magnet on the front wheel, therefore did not have a speedometer on my computer. I think this was good for me because it forced me to go by heartrate rather than speed which I'm bad about doing. I'll just sit there and stare at that average speed and freak out if it starts to drop. My second lap was still a little fast apparently, so after that lap I told myself, okay, it's time to ride smart, I've got a long way to go and I don't want to bonk. So I rode comfortable the REST of the way. I never pushed a gear, I rode relaxed, and I felt good. I was surprised at how windy it was; that was more annoying to me than the on and off rain during the day. If it had been a steady headwind from one direction, okay so you deal with it, have to go slower into it, etc., but this just seemed to whip around and I was fighting it from every angle. It definitely woke me up a couple times when it would jolt me out of my aerobars.

The plan for the bike was to take a break after every 6 laps (~30 miles) and just refuel along the way as I needed, just letting Brett know ahead of time what I needed. I used Perpetuem on the bike (mixed at 3 scoops per bottle) and then I would eat like a granola bar or something during my breaks. Well, I knew just getting going I wouldn't need to stop that early yet so I rode 10 laps (50 miles before my first break). I stopped and ate something then, don't remember what, perhaps it was the strawberry Newton's then, yeah that was it. I was already getting way behind on calories (should be ~235 cal. per hour on the bike). I just wasn't thirsty/hungry and it was wet and windy so it almost wasn't worth the effort to grab it. Brett scolded me and I promised to try harder (I didn't). Oh, and another thing about the breaks: I never sat down. I just would stop and stay straddled over my bike as Brett would bring me food, change my batteries or whatever. I think other people would occasionally sit down, not sure.

Here's where it starts to run together and I'll just be rambling now...oh wait, guess I've been doing that all along. Anyway, I think I decided to ride 6 laps and then go to the bathroom. After that stop, Brett decided he would come ride a few laps with me so he went to get his bike ready. He had told me he would see me, on the next lap so when I come back around he's not ready and I ain't waitin'! :) I go to the outbound turn around and as I'm coming back I see someone turn around early. Cheater!! Oh wait, that's Brett. No one would have gotten by with turning around early anyway because you had to call out your number at both ends. So that was nice to have someone to ride with. In this race, your crew is permitted to ride alongside you, just as long as you are not drafting off of them. Some of those people out there had people to ride with the entire way. A lot of the racers would kind of ride side by side and chit-chat too, but I just never seemed to be going the same direction or at the speed of anyone else so if I wasn't riding with Brett I was riding all alone. That's fine with me really. Oh, but I did ride by this one guy that picked up the pace to talk to me. I may have his story wrong, but I think he was going to do this race until he qualified for Hawaii so he dropped out and was crewing for a friend instead. He was asking how I liked my wheels because he was considering using HED's in Kona. Anyway, he asks me if I was a pro cyclist in Texas. Do what?! I nearly fell over with laughter. Does this big a\$\$ of mine look like that of a pro rider?? Yeah, that's gonna be a negative on that one. Everyone seemed to think I was Miss Bicyclist for some reason though. The race director just referred

to me as Biker Chick. Everyone kept warning me to stay controlled and comfortable. I started to kind of freak out that I was doing it all wrong. Am I going to fast? Is there a great big wall just waiting for me to smack into here in the next few hours? I was riding comfortable to ME though, so I just kept doin' what I do. Perhaps the cold had numbed my body to where I couldn't feel the pain, or perhaps I could blame the seemingly fast bike on the borrowed wheels. Yep, definitely Pat's fault for giving me these wheels!

Something weird that I noticed while riding was how people dressed. So many people had huge pants and tops on, like windpants or whatever. That certainly can't be aerodynamic at all. And of course, the majority had a lot more layers than me. Aside from my hands and feet, I felt fine in what I wore...I just couldn't stay at a rest stop for too long because the cold would sink in quick. I found out later that people thought I was nuts for riding in that little clothing. Ah well...I guess I was living up to my newbie/goober status.

Anyway, I think Brett rode about 5 laps with me, which was a nice mental booster. Went to the bathroom again. Okay, so I give up on listing every time I went to the bathroom because I can't remember every single time, but I went a lot. It was nuts. I was drinking like a quarter of what I drank at IMAZ and going about 20 times as much. It was insane and SO not like me. Brett was like, "How can you possibly have to go again if you're not drinking that much?" I say my body was acting like a sponge in the rain, just absorbing it. Whatever it was, dehydration was NOT an issue in this race :)

The sponsor story: So one time I came along Suzy, hoss Puerto Rican chick. She asks me if I have any sponsors. Again, I was just floored by these questions. No I'm not sponsored! Are you crazy?! She says, oh you need sponsors, you could do RAAM, blah blah. Suzy has a lot of sponsors: Avon, Hammer Nutrition, and Hawaiian Tropic being the big ones. She told me to come see her at the awards dinner to talk to her about sponsors because she said I had to have them. FYI right now: I didn't talk to her about it. I'm sorry, but I think one should be good, a true representative of the sport and I am not.

While so much of the biking is a blur, I do remember that Cathy showed up on lap 19. Woohoo!! Cathy is here! Although, when I saw her, I was just like, "What the heck are you doing out here, it's raining and cold!" Of course, I blame Cathy for bringing the real rain (see, it's nice to pawn my problems off on other people :)). She got there and it started to really rain. During the day it was mainly a drizzle to light rain, really not that big of a deal. Man, just when I thought it was about to lighten up, here would come down even harder. Again, I just started laughing. The road became a nice big winding river. There was no point in trying to avoid the puddles. I was wet and I was going to be wet until the end of the bike. The Race Director handed us some more messages during that time. I've kept all of them and you can definitely tell which ones got handed to me on the bike because they are all wrinkly. At this point dark is going to approach soon so I tell Brett that it's going to be time to get the lights out soon. I prayed that the rain would stop before it got dark. When we went to put on my headlight, we had a slight equipment malfunction for awhile. That thing would not screw on. I've put it on several times before with no issues, but by this point my hands were numb and gimpy so I couldn't do anything. Brett finally gets it on and I go for another lap (still daylight), but it's slipping big time. I come back and let him know and I think I ran to the bathroom while he worked on it. Anyway, somewhere in there we (HE) got it all worked out and all was right. I've decided that's it with these lights for races. We had the exact same issue at the 24 hr. Plus, I would quickly realize that these lights don't put off as much light as I thought. They were fine in the 24hr, but with the drizzle in the dark, my visibility was GREATLY reduced. Oh and the light I was using was a Cateye 500 LED light. Like I said, normally more than enough light, it was just the conditions and I saw some really bright lights out there. Anyway, so rain and light fiasco is what we got to deal with before nightfall. Cathy left just before night time too :( I would get to see her again in the morning. Oh, funny story on Brett though, hee hee. I have a helmet light and a headlamp for running. Well, he comes to me with my running headlamp and I'm like, no that's the running headlamp, not my helmet light. Well, next time around he comes to me with my helmet light and says, I can't get it to turn on and I've even asked other people if they can get it to turn on. I look at it. That's because you're missing the battery pack. Okay, so it was my fault for not taking the time to show him how all the lights worked, but I found it funny. But like I said, all issues were resolved before dark...ain't no thang.

Chapter 12: It's darker than the inside of a cow out here!

So when the RD found out I was blind in one eye he asked if I would have trouble seeing at night. Oh no! I'll be fine, I've ridden at night a lot now, no biggie. Well, as soon as it got dark, I freaked!! Like I said, it was kind of a misty, foggy night at first and my visibility was extremely short. That meant I had to slow WAAAY down and it was pi\$ing me off! I hate going slow, especially when it's not because my body is tired, but because I couldn't freakin' see?! I felt like everyone had better lights than me...well, some people had no lights at time and I have NO idea how they did that, but in general, there were some BRIGHT lights out there. Oh my gosh, there was this one lady...I think it was Susan, I referred to her as the sunlady after that. Her light was SO big and SO bright, if you approached her you would lose eyesight for a few minutes afterwards, lol. However, it was nice when I passed her because she would light my way for the next mile. Too bad she couldn't ride behind me a little ways during the night :) Anyway, back to my frustration...I just felt like everyone is still whizzing by and here I am going, where am I? The RD did put glow sticks on stakes every couple hundred meters or so which helped some. Then, on the run portion, he put them down the yellow line on the road extremely close together, so coming down the hill was nice because it was like having reflectors in the road. I was so upset and told Brett that I couldn't see. He said he wished he had lights for his bike and that's when I reminded him about my extra headlight. Doh! Hee hee, I don't think he really wanted to get back out there, but he did, no complaining. So after riding with me for a few laps, I settled down a bit. Slow was okay I guess and as the night went on my eyes (okay eye) adjusted more to the darkness and the mist eventually stopped and I could see again. Plus, I came by Suzy during the night and realized that she was going even slower than me so I was glad to know that at least it appeared that the women were going slower.

So, not much to it now, just biking biking biking. Somewhere in there my hands started to get really numb, like can't shift my gears numb. And now that I think about it, I can't remember if I tried to switch to full fingered gloves as it started to get dark, or later on. Anywho, I couldn't even pull off my short fingered gloves and putting on full fingered gloves was ridiculous. I had Brett try to pull them on for me, but my fingers were all gnarled up...it was quite pathetic. We eventually got them pulled up enough. That helped my hands a little bit, but I should have switched to full finger gloves long before that.

Also during the night riding, the Triples and then a couple of the Doubles had made it to the run. The first half of the run course and bike course were together so on the hill you would have people running out and back and the outbound cyclists all in one lane. So that could get a little hairy at times. Several of the runners ran in the complete dark with no headlights or reflective gear so it was hard to see them. Plus, several had crew running with them and they could be as wide as three abreast at times. So, I tried to hug the yellow line on the climb up so that I didn't take anyone out.

Somewhere in the middle of the night someone offered me some stew. Normally I wouldn't take someone up on it, but it sounded SO good. I told him sure, next lap. So at the end of my next lap, there it was waiting for me. I apologize for not talking about nutrition more, but to be honest, you could take my nutrition plan and throw it out the window where it would land on a car and be driven off far far away. That's how nonexistent it was in this race. I don't know why, I didn't mind the taste of Perpetuem, I drank it all through the 24 hr, IMAZ, etc. For some reason, I really just wasn't hungry and if I was, I wanted solid food, which made me nervous that it would come seek revenge on the run. My coach had told me to be prepared with something different. Luckily I had all of these other people to fall back on. I did drink some Perpetuem, just not near what I normally do. I think I kinda sorta came in around 235 cal./hr when you take in all the other stuff I ate.

When I reached laps in the upper 30's I asked what lap I was on to make sure that our numbers agreed with the race. They didn't. They were shorting me a lap, again. I kind of got panicked because in my mind, all I could think about was riding 46 laps and not a mile more. So, I rode out to the outbound turnaround and asked how many laps they had for me. They had the same number I had, so they said to have the transition people call them so that they could discuss. By the time I got back to the bottom of the hill it was all worked out, but Brett was mad that I wasted time with it. He said he had 2 hours to get it all worked out. Sorry, I just get nervous when things are wrong.

Another random fact about the race: Brakes no worky well when wet, coming down hill (this started after it got dark). Ugh, I would start feathering the brakes from the top of the hill, praying that I



would stop by the time I reached the bottom. I always had to clip out a foot at the bottom because somehow I'm a dork who can't make a turnaround on a downhill. So, sometimes I would do a little foot drag to get it to stop, and then flip around and head back up. At the outbound turnaround there was more space to turnaround so I could make that turn...well, until it got really late, then I stopped trusting myself up there too and would clip out every time. I think I need to work on that.

At lap 40, we changed my batteries one final time to get me through the final 6 laps. I was getting close! Brett would ask me at each turnaround what I wanted, but I didn't want anything. I told him that I wanted to be OFF THE BIKE. That's a first isn't it? Well, it wasn't so much that I was tired of the bike, I felt fine. It was just that all I could think about was being dry and warm .. even if briefly, and feeling my hands and feet again. My feet had been numb during the entire ride. Brett had asked if I wanted to change socks, but what would have been the point? My shoes were wet, so they would just be wet again too. I finally finished my 45th lap and asked the race officials, "Okay, this is my last lap, right?" The lady looked at me and said, "We have you finished with the bike now." What? No, there's no way we got off again. I didn't miscount or short-change myself a lap. Brett agreed, I still had one more, so I was going and off I went. So, as I was saying in my log (and I'll update this as soon as I hear more from the RD): In the information letter that he sent us he said that we had to ride 46 laps of 4.869 miles...which comes to 224 miles. At the race dinner, he said he couldn't remember the exact #, but we all know what it is. Well, when I looked at the results it's saying that we had to ride 45 laps. That would make sense as to why the race staff was telling me I was done. So, who knows, perhaps I did a little extra. Doesn't change the outcome any, but man am I kicking myself right now.

So, I either went out for my required lap or a little victory lap or something and then cruised down the hill to the bathrooms.

#### Chapter 13: Always room for improvement

Even though the bike is my favorite, there are certainly things to improve on. 1) Ride my pace...I think I did well with that this time, but that is a constant battle not to ride beyond my capability. 2) Let my crew, crew for me. Let them take care of the petty things like getting laps corrected, getting food, whatever. My job is to keep riding. Again, for the most part, I think we did well, especially for newbies. 3) As stupid as it is, practice turn arounds. Good grief, having to stop at the bottom each time is just ridiculous and wasted time. 4) Not ride extra...if that is indeed what I did. That's like 18-20 min. right there! 5) Nutrition! I got lucky in this race, but you've got to watch that like a hawk. Screw up your stomach and it can be a race ender right there, which sucks to have to quit when your body feels good, but your stomach is revolting on you. At the same time though, if you can't follow the plan, you need a back up plan. The stew, etc. wasn't exactly a back up plan, but it sure was good.

My thank you section: BRETT!! To Jon Richardson and the rest of the bike club for coming out and riding with me every now and then and for putting on the 12 hour ride. Actually, the Longview Bicycle Club deserves more thanks than that. They were who I first started riding with. They waited on me patiently when I could barely ride 60 miles. They were there when I would go on a 20 mile ride and blow up. They showed me how great riding a bike could be. Super big thanks to Dave Plants, the owner of our local bike shop who worked on my bike whenever I asked and gave me so much stuff for free or greatly reduced price. And thanks to that deer I saw on lap 14...the deer ran across the road a ways in front of me, but started to turn to come back across which would have been in to me. So thank you deer for going with Plan A to continue truckin' left rather back into me.

T2

#### Chapter 14: Uhh, Gina? You fall in?

After the bike section I rode my bike down to the bathrooms to change there for the run. I was so excited about being DRY. They had those hand dryers in there and a chair so I propped my feet up under it and just hit the button a few times until I could feel my feet again. Did the same thing for my hands too. Oh, and that reminds me. I pulled off my gloves and my hands freaked me out. They were so swollen and grey looking. Towards the end, I wasn't able to ride in my aerobars as much which was putting a lot of weight on my hands. I think if I had been out there much longer I would have ripped the skin off of them. As I ran them under the water they stung where they were starting to come apart. My legs were just black from road grime so I tried to clean up a little bit out of the sink. Now I was finally ready to get dressed. By this point in the race, the rain had long stopped and temp was in

the 50's. I decided to start out in tri shorts, short-sleeved top and then a thin fleece pullover. Again, if I decided I needed more layers, I could add later. This turned out to be the right amount. I chunked all of my wet bike stuff that I never wanted to see again into my bag and finally made it outside. Brett told me it was a good thing that I bike faster than I transition. I know it was bad, but man did it feel good to be dry and warm, I was a new person. Brett took my bike and stuff to load in the car while I walked up the hill to check-in with the race staff and then off to running.

#### Chapter 15: It's alright

I don't care that my transition was long. Just be glad that I even came back out of that bathroom and didn't call it a day right then! :) It was toasty in there.

#### Run

#### Chapter 16: Keep moving forward

I ran that first lap and thought I was gonna die!! Mother chicken did the balls of my feet hurt!! I was getting concerned that this would be the deal breaker right here. I think it was just that they had been so soft after the bike and they didn't quite have full feeling in them. I kept moving forward though and it went away, whew! The run plan: run 9/walk 1 as long as I could. Nutrition: about 190 calories per hour using mainly Gel and Perpetuem. Well, if you thought my biking nutrition was bad, you ain't seen nothing yet, but I'll get to that.

I think I was on lap 3 when I started to fall asleep. Holy shibit! You know, I've read Dean's book and read about how he would fall asleep while running, but to be honest I always thought, how can you possibly fall asleep while you are having to force your body to move. I can understand how people fall asleep on the bike because you can stop pedaling and just sit there, but on the run? Well, I am a believer now. It's bad when you start to think to yourself, "I'll just close my eyes for just a second...I just need to rest my eyes." Next thing I know I'm stumbling around out there. Yikes! Brett came out there somewhere in the dark. It was funny because I was coming back down and I thought I heard someone call my name, but I was like, no one knows my name out here, I must just be hearing things. Well, later on Brett finally catches up with me and he's like, did you not hear me calling you? Oops! The whole 9/1 thing lasted MAYBE 3 laps. Brett came up with the idea to walk up the big hill and then run the rest, so that's what we did for awhile. Anyway, I tell Brett that I'm super sleepy. I didn't know what to do. All I could think about was laying down. I just couldn't imagine a Red Bull or something like that being a fix. I told him that I would see if I could wake up with him running with me. It worked for a couple of laps, but then it started to overtake me again. Brett, I've gotta take a power nap. So Brett asks if I can do one more loop while he gets a place for me to lay down in the tent ready. I say yes, so I go for one more lap. I felt horrible for being such a weenie and needing to lay down, but it was the only way I thought I could survive that race. I come back down the hill and he tells me to step over the river at the front of our tent and lay down on the left where he had a couple of blankets. I just face planted in there. Brett even covered me up and I told him to give me 15-20 min. Oh my gosh did it feel SO good to be horizontal. I don't think I ever really fell asleep because the people next to us had a generator that was really loud and my body started to do that convulsing thing because of the cold. But I think it allowed me to relax my body just enough that when Brett told me to get up, I got up and started back up the hill. It worked, I was fine the rest of the way...well, towards the end of the race I was kinda getting tired again, but it wasn't a show stopper by then.

Back to running in the dark. Somewhere in there that's when I had a HUGE craving for French fries. I told Brett, "You know what I really want? French fries!" Brett was like, gee sorry I can't whip those up for ya' right now. I knew we didn't have any, they just sounded good and I don't know why because I gave up French fries almost 3 years ago. Anyway, I just kept taking my gel and water at the beginning of each lap. Bleh!

Another dark running tidbit of info: So apparently ultra racers have no issues with releasing bodily gasses. During the night, I never heard so much belching and farting in my life. Guess you gotta do what you gotta do, but man was it hilarious. Oh, and I'll go ahead and tell this one now too: During the day when Cathy and I are doing a lap, the Swiss guy, Beat, who was the overall winner for the Triple is running back towards us on his lap. He literally stops, cocks his leg out to the side, makes a grimacing face, and just lets one rip...right in front of us! And then just carries on. Cathy and I just

laughed, how do you respond to that??

Daylight came around 7 am and it was so nice to finally ditch the headlamp. Brett said he was going to get me to a 6 hour marathon (pathetic I know, but it sounded really fast at the time). So I finished my first marathon around 8 am (started run a little after 2 am) and that's with my nap so I was happy about that. I told him to not expect anything great from there on out. During the first part of the run we kept watching for Suzy to hit the run course to see how far back she was. I knew running was her best event so I was still running in fear of being caught. In the beginning I would run a lap and see Suzy out on the bike course, do another and she'd still be out there, and so on. When is she going to start running?? The other two women had dropped out on the bike so I knew Suzy was all I had left. Oh, and let me just say, I don't look down on ANYONE for quitting on the bike. It was absolutely nasty out there, kudos to anyone who stuck it out as long as they did. Perhaps I really am 'crazy' like everyone keeps saying and that's how I was able to make it through it. Anyway, Suzy finally hits the run and she is 10 laps behind me!! That's 20 miles!! I tell Brett that I could walk the whole thing and there would be no way she could catch me. Brett was like, umm, that's nice, but I don't think so. You're gonna run some Missy! Let's not get crazy here. Yes sir.

Cathy was going to come out again and Brett told me that she was on her way. Cathy was going to take care of me while he laid down for a little bit. Brett was killing himself. Sometime during the dark running hours Brett told me that James (LeCrac) was going to help me for a little bit while he went to see the race doctor. I think Brett was too hopped up on caffeine and wasn't hydrated enough. Glad he got to feeling better though, I couldn't do this without him. So anyway, Cathy showed up when I think I had 12 laps (24 miles left). Brett starts a lap with me and he pulls out these French fries!! Oh my goodness!! I made a dive into the box and Brett was like, "Whoa! Save some for next lap!" Man was I excited and boy were they GOOOD! During the daylight hours on the run is when they really started giving me messages. Thanks again BT! The RD said I owed him a ream of paper for all of the messages I received. So the routine became: walk the first part of the hill, eat, drink, read a few messages and then start running, err shuffling. I was really starting to get all choked up from reading the messages. It's scary to think about that many people wanting to finish and the thought of letting them down. By the run I KNEW I could finish, but I just couldn't get there fast enough for my liking.

The shuffling: Like I said, originally we had devised the plan of walk the hill, run the rest. Well, it just became too painful to start running after walking that long. Shuffling the entire way became much easier for me and was faster anyway. So, I would just walk the first part of the hill while getting nutrition in and then shuffle the rest of the time.

Once Cathy got there she took care of me and would walk and shuffle with me. Brett had the great idea of bringing his fuel belt so rather than keeping up with my water bottle, he had his fuel belt filled with water and coke. I drank lots of coke in the end because it helps to keep my stomach feeling good. So, that must have looked great: eating French fries and drinking coke...kids, do not try this at home, I am a professional :) It worked for me, I had ZERO stomach issues. The race photographer made sure to get pictures of it too, fabulous.

And now for the French fry story for those who haven't heard it (and I hope I get it right): See, I guess Brett had told Cathy that I wanted French fries. So, on her way she stops at a McDonalds. Well, we all know how McD's ONLY does breakfast until 10 am. Therefore, no French fries. Well, Cathy talks to the Manager and tells her about my race and what I'm doing and that I wanted French fries. The Manager is taken aback that I would do something like this. The hash browns and French fries cook at separate temperatures, therefore, that's why they don't do both at the same time. Well, I guess the Manager was impressed with the story because she made a batch of French fries for Cathy and gave them to her. This McD's was about 20-25 miles away so Cathy put the fries in the passenger seat and turned the car heater on them to keep them warm. Now that's what I call a dedicated crew person right there!! Thanks Cathy!! They were awesome!! And just so everyone knows...I didn't go through mounds of French fries, I know too many would have been trouble, but I had a few and they definitely hit the spot.

Back to shuffling...my shuffling just got slower and slower and it became more of an exaggerated high knee walk or something. With about 6-7 laps left, Brett walks up the hill to meet me. As I'm 'running' down the hill beside him I ask, "Is my running still faster than a walk?" Brett was like, umm, I don't

know, how you doing keeping up with me? He was walking and my run wasn't any faster!! Alrighty, I'm walking then if I can't run any faster. Retarded, but let me just say, there was LOTS of walking out there. I do wish I could have ran more though. Anyway, by that point Cathy and Brett alternated walking laps with me to keep me moving at a faster walk pace because on my own I tended to lollygag around.

#### Chapter 17: Last Lap!!

There is no other feeling in the world than being on that last lap! Brett insisted that I do it on my own and that they would wait for me with the flag midway up the hill. See, for the finish, the race gives you your national flag part way up the hill to run into the finish with. They also play your national anthem as you come in too. Anyway, when I started my last lap, one of the Triple guys was starting his last lap as well...maybe 30 sec. to a min. ahead of me. Brett said to make sure to distance myself from him for the finish. I thought, no big deal, this guy has been running much faster than me anyway. So, I decide to walk up the hill and then try to run the rest of the way. As I'm walking up the hill, Debbie (the woman from T1) runs up to me and decides to do the last lap with me, she had been running to get in her scheduled long run before IMFL. So, it was nice to have someone to talk to. She was so excited and telling everyone that I was on my last lap as we went by. When I reached the top of the hill I decided to try a run. Ugh, it was so painful at first, but I told myself, that this is it I can hurt for just a few more minutes. Well, as I start shuffling, I see the Triple guy, completely stop and start stretching. I kind of hold up a little to let him get going again because he deserved to finish in front of me, but he wasn't going anywhere so I kept going. I ran to the turnaround and told them goodbye and now it was back to the finish line. Cathy had asked what I wanted at the finish and all I could think of was a chair. I didn't want food, water, whatever, I just wanted to SIT down. So, that's all I could think about on the way back in. I start down the hill for the final time and look back for Triple dude. I can't see him at all. Well, sorry dude, I'm not waiting, this chica needs to be DONE! So, I make the curve and see my flag waiting for me...and no Brett. What? Is he not going to run in with me? I had insisted that Cathy and Brett had to run in with me because they helped me to get there. Turns out Brett was running to the bottom of the hill to let them know they needed to play the US National anthem first rather than the English anthem (the Triple guy was English). Then he busts it back up the hill to run in with me. Poor Brett. I don't think anyone expected me as soon because somewhere on that last lap I found these actual running legs (not just a shuffle, there was height in my step). Too bad I didn't find them earlier. Anyway, Cathy handed me the flag and oh what a feeling! We continued down the hill and as we came around the last curve, I heard it, my national anthem and I nearly lost it. I was choking back the tears as we were running in. You think hearing Mike Reilly saying, "\_\_\_\_\_, YOU are an Ironman" is the best sound in the world, man try running in with your national anthem. I know it's just a race, but man you really feel like you're representing your country. I ran under the banner and could finally stop for good. The finish was really chaotic to me because the Race Director is hugging me and everyone is congratulating me and I'm being spun around to take a million pictures. Ahh, but it was the best!

#### Chapter 18: Run Gina Run!!

Yep, I gotta learn how to run on the run. Way too much walking there. The bike isn't always going to save me...I lucked out this time. That last lap when I forced myself to go, I did it. I've gotta work through my comfort zone and be willing to let it hurt a little. That's pretty much it. Nutrition worked for me, I never felt hungry or bonky, just didn't run like I should have.

Thank yous: Of course Brett and Cathy for pulling me along in the race. It would have become much more of a nature walk had it not been for them. Super big thanks to Jon who raced miles and miles with me in training (and possibly broke his foot because of it...again, jury still out on that one). And thanks to all the others who came out and ran a lap or two with me: Nancy, Mark, Ric, Pat, and Clif.

Post race

#### Chapter 19: SIT

After the paparazzi were finished with me :) Cathy and Brett led me to the best place on earth...a plastic chair. Oh my goodness did it feel good to sit down. The sun had come out about 3-4 laps before I finished so it was now a beautiful day and without the mud everywhere you would have never guessed how miserable it was the day before. The sun felt so good and it was now just a light breeze.

I didn't want to get up. I sat around and talked with Cathy for a little bit before she left, talked to a couple people on the phone and snacked on trail mix. Brett and Cathy had so wonderfully loaded just about everything so I didn't even have to think about it. Brett laid down in the tent for a little bit. I had made the decision that there was NO way that muddy wet tent was going in my car. It was cheap anyway, so I said chunk it. I think Brett was glad to see it go :) They had a massage therapist who charged \$1 a minute and I was saying how wonderful that would be, but my purse was back at the cabin. So of course, too sweet Cathy handed me a twenty and insisted I go. So, I stand up to hug Cathy good bye and walk across the road and HOLY COW, the body wastes no time in locking up on you. I wasn't sure I could make it the 30 feet to the massage table. So, about an hour later (okay, maybe not that long) I make it there. I felt terrible for having her massage me when I was so gross, but I guess she was used to it. That was the most painful massage ever. I hurt, and what's weird is it was more at the joints than the muscles, my knees and ankles HURT. She tried stretching my legs and attempted to bend my knees. I screamed and we decided they really didn't need to be stretched after all. :) So after that I made the long journey back across the road and Brett and I decided to head back to the cabin for SHOWERS!! Woohoo!! Brett had driven my car up the hill so I hobbled to it and we drove back through the course to the cabin. Along the way I saw Steve Bozeman on his last lap. It was so cool because he had his entire crew with him and they all had an American flag running down the hill. It was a beautiful site. Drove by Suzy and told her to keep it up. We made it back to the cabin and that's when I began cursing whoever thought the three steps up to the cabin was a good idea. I know I joke about all of the pain, but I'm serious, you have NO idea how slow I was moving and even that HURT. I let Brett hop in the shower first so I could call more people. He gets out and I hobble in. I get out of the shower and we still have a little bit until the awards dinner. I ask Brett if he wants to set an alarm clock and take a nap beforehand. He was already a step ahead of me, he had it set and was in bed.

Chapter 20: Sorry, but we didn't get our Red Bull IV.

The awards dinner was at 7 pm at the Lake Anna Winery which was about 4 miles away. Since the race started close to 30 min. late, that meant that some people could possibly be on the course until 7:30 pm. Brett and I wanted FOOD. We walked in and hardly anyone was there yet. They had open bar so we each had a glass of wine while waiting for food. Slowly people started showing up and everyone seemed so happy and social and umm, awake. Did we do a different race from everyone else?? I mean, seriously, I could have cared less about my award. I just wanted food, bed...in that order and soon. We finally started eating around 8 pm. They had swordfish, rice, grilled veggies, salad, etc. It was good, although I think just about any food substance would have worked for me at that point. Then it was time for the awards. They introduced all of the finishers and we received a trophy, medal, certificate, and finisher's long-sleeved Patagonia shirt. You could really see the love all of these people had for the sport. It was really special, but boy was I glad when it was over. I felt bad for bailing as soon as it was over, but my eye lids were dropping fast. We headed back to the cabin and crashed. I was surprised though that I actually slept, usually I'm so tired from these things but can't sleep. Well, I slept until about 6:30 am the next morning. So pretty good I think.

Chapter 21: Just say no to FAT!!

Overall, how could I not be happy about that race? I met every single one of the goals I set for myself and did things I didn't know possible. I did learn a lot this year that I hope to work on for next year. Brett and I both just thought of so many things to bring or do next year when I attempt the Triple. My biggest limiter though: weight. I REFUSE to go back next year looking like I did this year!! I've said this to several people, but I looked like a sumo wrestler out there compared to those other women. It all boils down to nutrition. I had no willpower the months leading up to this race and ate horribly. I think I actually put on weight. No more of that! So nutrition is the big thing. Plus, I rarely did my strength training, I skipped workouts, etc. I've GOT to be more disciplined next year. Plus, I've got to manage my life better too. I let so many things slide like cleaning house, etc. that I would just let things build and build until I had a meltdown. Next year, I'm going to be more organized, do a little each day and maintain things so that they don't get out of hand. But like I said, what a great learning experience this race was!

Event comments:

Chapter 22: Experience of a lifetime

WOW!! That pretty much sums up my feelings on this race. It was the toughest thing I've ever done, but the most wonderful experience of my life. You saw the true human spirit out there. Never have I met such genuinely nice people, willing to help you out in any way possible, even if they were your competitor. It was all about making it to the finish line, push your body like it's never been pushed before. The human body and mind are true marvels and we take it for granted too often I think. I was simply in awe of the other athletes, what an honor to be competing alongside them. And to people like Brett and Cathy, thanks wouldn't begin to express my appreciation. The BT community is simply awesome. To have someone you've never met come from another state and work their tail off for you, especially in the conditions we had this weekend...again, WOW! Like I said, there is no way I would have made it without them. And you know who I credit so much of this race to? And this came as a big shock to me too...my parents. I know I rag on them for not really being involved in my triathlon life, but I credit my mental toughness to my parents. They are the most bullheaded people I have ever met and I guess it rubbed off on me...in a good way I think. My parents are as far from quitters as it gets. They've been through so much in life...starting at the very bottom and working their way up. If you ever wanted someone in my family to do something, just tell them they can't because that's exactly how they will prove you wrong. So anyway...don't anyone go tell my parents that. Can't have them getting all excited :) Bottom line, this race is awesome! The race staff are out there purely for the love of the sport and the Race Director is constantly trying to improve it. I loved the laid back atmosphere. The distance is overwhelming enough, you don't need to deal with a bunch of uptightness along with it. I realize that ultra distance isn't for everyone, but if you want to see something truly amazing go watch it, go help. Amazing!

Oh yeah, and I'm still in shock that I now have the record for the youngest female to ever finish this race, I won overall female, and I was 4th out of 20 starters (12 finishers). Oh, and looking at other records, I now have the third fastest female bike time at this course and the third fastest female overall time on the course. Not too shabby! :)