

I am Boricoa, like the Coqui.....

In Puerto Rico, we have a little frog called "The Coqui", who cannot survive anywhere else except Puerto Rico. He is happy in the warmth of the island breezes and the local people.....and there I was unlike the Coqui not in the warmth and definitely not singing.....

On 4 October 2006, I found myself at the Tri All 3 Sport cases HQ, where Eric took great care of me, and presented me with a double TRIALL3SPORT case, the next morning I was on an early flight from Ontario CA, to sunny? Virginia!

I arrived in Washington DC, 9pm at night, Linda picked me up. I was easy to spot as I was the only person in DC to be wearing shorts. It was raining hard outside and it was NOT warm. I had recently met Linda at the Highline Hammer in Montana, and was really grateful to be able to stay at her home.

I woke up on the 6th at 11am, snug as a bug (oblivious to the weather outside), to a call from Jon Foster of Hawaiian Tropic. He was informing me of the tropical storm which was passing over Virginia! That day 3.8 inches of rain fell. It was a cause for concern as I had nothing water proof with me. Linda was to save my race and I was given Gore Tex booties, shoe covers, Neoprene socks, etc... I was driven down to the race site in pouring rain! When I arrived at Lake Anna State Park, the Triple IRON racers were cycling in a torrential downpour, meanwhile the Hawaiian Tropic package had arrived for the Double IRON racers. But the sun did not appear!

On race morning I was woken at 5am. Brrr! Cold and Wet outside still! Steve Kirby, the Race Director, and his wife Cindy had let me stay in their cabin. It had stopped raining but was still drizzly at the lake. I found Linda, who was going to help me finish this race, and put on my Aquaman Wetsuit. I also had a body-glove rash guard to keep a little bit of warmth inside me. The swim was 4.8 miles! That was equivalent to 24 loops in the lake. Every 7 loops I would take Hammer-Gel and water. By the time 24 loops came around I had been in the lake for 3 hours and 8 minutes!! I was frozen! As I shuddered to the shore, Linda was there to help me with my wet suit, and hot coffee!!

It took forever for me to get changed into my cycling gear. My hands were freezing and I could not stop shaking! I had so many layers on you could be forgiven into thinking I was going to the North Pole, Long pants, thermal tops, waterproof gloves, neoprene socks etc.... oh and even a hat under my helmet!!! I used clear lenses in my Rudy Project glasses as there was ZERO sunlight! Finally I was ready to get on my Aegis bike, as it was really wet I took a little pressure out of my Serfas tires so my Spinergys would grip the road better, it was 224 miles, which translated into a 45 loop bike course in Lake Anna State Park. It would be open to traffic as recently there had been new cabins built. During the day it rained on and off. It actually dropped 1.8 inches of rain that day. I was so grateful to Linda for the warm and waterproof gear I was wearing!

The bike ride was for me gruel ling. It was windy, wet and in the night the temperatures dropped to 48 degrees F. At first the loops seemed short but as the miles added up, the loop seemed to get longer, they were no longer flat but hilly!! Then the night set in, and Linda and her friends put the Night Rider lights on, the bike course took on a completely new perspective. With the total darkness came eerie shapes and shadows. Every now and again a car would temporarily blind my vision - I would wobble a bit, regain the line. Every loop Linda was there with her friends with hot cocoa,

water, Hammer Heed, Perpetuem, always something. Most importantly they were always wearing smiles to keep up the moral. During the night volunteers made soup, pasta and stew. It was amazing as the whole race sight was just one huge mud pit! The volunteers must have been so cold yet all where friendly shouting words of encouragement to the cyclists.

Definitely there was a need for umbrellas and wellington boots!! Most of the cyclists had made black plastic bags into stylish rain jackets and matching boots!!! The weather was relentlessly miserable! As the final few laps approached I started hallucinating imagining holes in the road that were not there, and huge boulders similar to the canyons I cycle through in California!

The traffic was the greatest problem for me as the headlights would blind me, which when mixed with tiredness was a formula for some serious swerving!! On the last two laps I was lucky enough to see many deer on the edge of the forest. I was so GRATEFUL to complete the 45th lap I could have cried for joy! (I also had one of the slowest bike times.. but I finished!)

Now if you have not seen me race , you would think I would DNF, but instead I rested for 20 minutes trying to get warm, I sprayed the inside of my Brooks running shoes with Kool'n'Fit and snuggled in a sleeping bag. Calculating with Linda how we would run the 52 miles as I would need to do the event in less than 12 hours to officially finish.

It was still cold when I started to run, but there was early morning light. So I was with long Brooks running tights and a pink long sleeve top. My Hawaiian Tropic suntan well hidden!! Linda and I started out at a blistering pace. In 5 hours we had 26 miles done!!! The weather seemed to be brightening up and I was happy to have Linda as a pacer. Each loop was 2 miles consisting of a wee uphill which was a huge downhill on the return! I carried the Kool'n'Fit spray as it felt good when I sprayed my tired aching legs or my lower back, I also shared the Kool,n,Fit with other athletes as well. At about mile 35 the sun came out and I felt like the Puerto Rican coqui again, it was warm and sunny and I was happy to be running 52 miles in Virginia and I felt like singing....

It was not until we were on the final 8 miles that Linda was to tell me she was hurting. Linda is a great trail runner, but had not anticipated running for 50 miles on tarmac. I felt awful as I was so grateful to have her run with me! The friendly chatter, food and water etc... Linda was a true trooper and finished strong with me. On the last loop I was given a huge Puerto Rican flag and then the Puerto Rican national anthem was played,

I had managed to do the run (with Linda's help) in 11 hours and 35 minutes. My total time was 35 hours and 3 minutes. A lot slower than I had planned, but considering 19 athletes started and only 12 finished I guess it was a good time.

On reflection these Double IRON distance races add a whole new dimension to the word "RACE" lets try survival, or just to finish would feel good. The camaraderie from fellow athletes and their crews is something a short triathlon lacks. When it is cold and miserable everyone tries to cheer each other up. During the wet weekend, Arthur Puckrin, 68 years old, finished the Triple, Gina 26 years old the Double, Steve Bozeman of Virginia ran in memory of Marines who had lost their lives serving their country, he also owns the record for completing 14 Doubles. Many athletes with different backgrounds and reasons to suffer.....

The awards ceremony was held at a winery and we were treated to wine and food, whilst the awards were given out.

For me this was my last long race for AVON and Breast Cancer in 2006. I managed to raise \$1,967 as I completed 281 miles. I would like to thank Steve Kirby and his wife Cindy for bracing out the cold conditions and a special thank you to Linda who helped me complete this race. (Whose husband David finished in 2nd place in the Double)

To Jon Foster of Hawaiian Tropic, Hammer Nutrition, Rudy Project, Aegis Bikes, Brooks running shoes, Triall3 sport cases, Aquaman Wetsuits Serfas tires, Profile Design, Bodyglove girl suits, Sambazon and my boyfriend Al for giving me the quality time I needed to cycle, run and swim.