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Subject: RR: Virginia Double IM

It's taken me a week to process this race... and start to get used to the off-season. So, get a cuppa coffee and here goes my race report:

We arrived at the race site, a beautiful state park in middle of no-where Virginia, on Friday afternoon. As we pulled into the park there were bikes on the course. Went in and parked and said hello to the race director and saw people swimming in the lake. The Triple IRON had started at 7am that morning and racers were pacing out laps. That's right. Triple. I was going to start my race a full day after these guys and gals had started their race and we'd all start hitting the finish line together. What a wuss to only be doing the DOUBLE! There were some amazing athletes and stories in the Triple... from a 69 year old gentlemen who is doing the Triple as a training race for the Deca in a few weeks, to the amazing Brazilian runner who ran barefoot for much of the run but couldn't run down the race leader, to Gina V who is one of my new "girls who show folks what girls can do"... I'd be watching them all race as I did my race, and I was just wowed.

But, this would be the longest no-break triathlon I'd ever done, so time to focus on me. Kinda interesting having Drew as my crew... as we checked in and through the race dinner the other athletes were checking him out... "He looks fast! I bet he'll be racing for the win"... Um, nope. The chubby chic next to him, the wife, she's the one racing. Coming into this race I'm feeling good about my solid season, but a little anxious about my running (with the broken toes from the 24 hour race three weeks before) and of course my nutrition, but I'm generally feeling good. I do a jog of the run course while Drew sets up my bike, then a lap of the bike. There's a bit of a hill on the way out on the run, basically the run is up over a hill then down the other side, turn, come back over. The bike is slightly hilly, but more textured than painful.

We go out for a nice meal, do some grocery shopping, come back for the race meeting, then off to bed. I sleep pretty well and soon its time to head back to the race. The Triples are still out there, most on the bike, a few on the run, as we pull into the park. Drive down and take in the feeling in the air - enjoying the quiet and lack of moving as the sky starts to lighten up. Not much to set up, as Drew will have plenty of time to get organized as I'm racing. Eventually we make our way down to the lake, put on the wetsuits, and walk into the water.

The swim is a 12 lap affair, following a nice buoy line. Plan is for Drew to feed me every three laps: water and GU. A really calm "Go" from the RD and we get horizontal and go. Folks spread out nicely and it's just a really calm swim in a perfectly flat lake with perfect not too hot or cold water. Very soothing. Oh, wait. I'm supposed to be racing. Three laps in, I stand up and look for Drew. He's slowly walking into the water and I try not to get impatient waiting for my feed. Look around and take stock. I'm near the back of the pack, but not last. Haven't been lapped yet. There's Paul, a fellow Coloradian getting some drink as well. Walk back to chest deep and start swimming. Paul comes around and I laugh seeing that he is actually wearing socks on his feet. Follow his feet for most of the lap, then lose him as he stops for more water. I amuse myself by trying to come up with rhymes for the lap number... "lap 5, I'm still alive", "Lap 7, is that light

heaven?", "Lap 10, 2 more again". Finally I'm done and I get up, grin at the lap counters, and head towards shore.

Most people were stopping to shower and change after the swim, and then ride up to the start of the course, but I figured any time I wasn't moving on the course was wasted so I left my bike up at the start of the bike, and took the shortcut hike up the grass while sipping a cuppa soup. Shoes on, helmet on, and time to go. (Fastest transition of the day I might add... I can do something fast!)

The bike would be 45 laps of 5 miles each. 2.5 miles out, tight turn around a cone, 2.5 miles back, another cone turn, this one on a downhill. I settled into my rhythm pretty quickly. Stand coming out of the turns, stay up on the bars on the way out (more uphill), aerobars on the way back. SQUEAL. My front brakes were off a bit and the carbon rims... well, let's say everyone noticed when I came into the turn until I learned to just use the rear. The transition turn-around was full of tents and people, really fun to come into all that liveliness after the quiet on the course.

Tried to stay around 18 minutes per lap. Didn't push hard, just stayed nice and smooth. Really enjoyed the bike. Had a very slow conversation with the folks at the far turn around (about a sentence a lap), chatted with the other riders, did a few laps with Paul and got really jealous of the fact that he could pee on the bike. I've gained the skill to pee while swimming, don't even need to stop kicking, but I cannot and will not learn to pee on my bike. Decided to wait until the first IM bike was done, then take a break to pee and lube and get my lights set up for the dark.

The plan was to take InfinIT on the bike (is working quite well for me this year) and to have Drew give me a bite of something solid each lap to keep my stomach working. This plan almost worked... Drew got into the ultra-wives club and there was wine and beer and fun chat so he tended to forget on occasion, but we got enough food into me that I never felt hungry or empty. Did have a gorgeous cup of chicken tortellini soup around midnight... awesome!!! Once it got dark it was a bit quieter, less chat and cheers to the other riders because it was hard to see them... occasionally I'd pass someone and slow down to chat with them, but in general it was just a long focused ride. I did talk at length with the RD for Triathlon De Levis (a Double in Canada I'll be doing next season) and a below knee leg amputee doing the Triple who was both inspiring and amusing (He ended up dropping out of the run after the Double because he was having pains with his leg... but he was the first amputee to complete a Double IRON).

Finally the bike was done, and it was time to run. Dropped the bike and looked around for a place to change into run shorts. This was the only time I wished we'd brought a tent! It was dark (sometime in the middle of the night) so I went behind someone's tent and changed up. Nice to be out of the bike shorts! It was slightly chilly, but very humid so I went with a long sleeved shirt and shorts. After but a few laps I was ready for a singlet instead, twas quite warm without the breeze from the bike.

The hill had gotten bigger during the bike, and was ever increasing during the run. I decided pretty quick to walk up (about a half mile), jog down to the tent (turnaround), run/walk back up (shallower hill), then jog down. I got into a nice rhythm and just ticked them off. About an hour till dawn the crescent moon and stars were unbelievable. It was really quiet and peaceful... hmm... getting sleepy... getting REALLY sleepy. Got back to

transition and told Drew I needed a 10 minute nap. 10 minutes later I got a tap on my shoulder and just put up a hand for 5 more. That did it perfectly and I was ready to go again.

As the run went on my jogs turned more into shuffles and my walks were more stroll than power walk. I got Drew to go with me every other lap so I'd have something to look forward to. I chatted with Paul who just kicked butt on the run. Eventually it got HOT. Really HOT. Drew wet a towel and I'd drape that over my shoulders re-chilling it every lap. I chatted with folks going by, smiled at those that didn't speak the language, and just paced it out. Never wanted to quit, but was looking forward to the finish.

This was an amazingly international competition... more than half the racers were non-American. Made it interesting to try to talk, lots of smiles, waves and thumbs up. From early Saturday when the Triples were getting on the run course walking was the thing. Crazy to see all these people slowly doing laps. One guy was trashed, but still moving, accompanied by his wife pushing their baby in a stroller throughout the night. Everyone was competing against themselves... we were all out there against the course but not really against each other it seemed. As the run went on the talk turned to how many to go. And, on the last lap there'd be hugs and high fives and a bit of jealousy as the trudge continued.

Finally there was two to go. Then one. Two guys held up the finish line and the RD played the national anthem (he played each racers country tune as they crossed the line). I walked through, and dropped into a chair. Done. Totally done. Tearfully done. Done. We headed back to Washington for a 6am flight the next morning and so ends the season.

I really liked this distance. I think it is in many ways easier than Ultraman because it's continuous, and while my nutrition suffered a bit on the run I knew I could push to the end. At Ultraman I am really challenged to eat enough each day to fuel the next day and that wasn't really a problem here. I think I could have and should have pushed a bit harder on the bike, next time I will try to do a "hard" lap every three laps to bring my speed up. Same concept on the run. I was racing to finish, and I think that now I have a beautifully soft PR to bring down at Double IRON Triathlon Levis next year. The Levis RD said he's hoping for close to 10 women at the race next year, and I'm planning to race to compete and see how I can do.

Overall it has been just a splendid season for me. I've done well at some challenging events, and I think I am starting to come into form as an ultra-distance athlete. Last week I suffered a bit from PTRS (Post Traumatic Race Syndrome) and was cranky, sore, and tired. This week I'm bouncing between optimism and happiness, and depression that the season is over and I will not be going to Hawaii next month. By next week I'll likely just be bouncing and ready to get back at it!

Taking it one at a time...

Leslie