

Suffer Fest 2008

Triple IRON Race Report

Written by Bill Bradley ~ 9 October 2008

Virginia Triple IRON was an amazing experience!!! 12 athletes competed in the Triple IRON and 20 competed in the Double IRON from 10 different countries. I managed to finish the 7.2 mile swim, 336 mile bike and 78.6 mile run in 56 hours and 39 minutes good for 8th place. I took a total of 2 hours and 15 minutes sleep during the race.

Swim is an 18 lap loop course in Lake Anna with a water temperature of 74 degrees. I had a very good swim for me. I managed to swim the 7.2 miles in 4 hours. 39 minutes. The wind kicked up the second half of the swim causing the lake to become very choppy. One competitor told me he got motion sickness. The chop caused me to swallow a lot of water. This is the longest amount of time I have ever swam. Last hour my arms were definitely getting tired. My mantra during that period that I said over and over was "Keep it together." Referring to my technique. I also reminded myself to stay relaxed. My swim surprisingly was the 6th best split.

Bike was a 5 mile loop course over rolling hills. My time for the 336 mile bike of was 25 hours and 15 minutes (This included 1 hour 15 minutes of sleep) was the 3rd best bike split. I actually got off the bike in 4th place overall. Other than to sleep I kept time off the bike seat to usually 1 to 2 minutes. to refuel. I also managed to hit my goals nothing was to Raw, Bruised or mostly Numb!!!! I was able to do this by trading back and forth on my two bikes every 3 to 4 hours to be in a slightly different position and put lots of lube on!! This is the first plane ride home from a Biking event this year that I didn't have to sit on my make shift "Butt Donut". Success!!!

Run was a 1 mile out and back course. That you had to do 39 times to make your 78.6 miles. Really tough mentally to do that many laps. On the positive side though is you come into tent city where all the crews are set up frequently. Everyone is so supportive it always gave you a boost as you headed out for the next lap! I was shuffling and power walking 15 to 20 minute miles. I put in a Surge when I felt good from mile 10 to 15 at about 10 minutes a mile. At mile 25 I really started having trouble with my feet. The pavement was taking a toll. The pain on the balls of my feet felt like I was walking on gravel barefoot! Needless to say this did slow me down. I traded between 2 pairs of running shoes and even sandals with minimal success to relieve the pain.

At 5am at the end of the second night. I had a particularly bad stretch. I was out on the course and I just could not stay awake. I was falling asleep on my feet. I was so exhausted after 46hrs. of racing I was afraid to take a 10 minute power nap without someone around to wake me up. After what felt like an eternity I finally stumbled into tent city and Jim led me to the van for that 10 minute power nap and guess what I did wake up on my own screaming "Where am I?"

At around mile 52 of the run I picked up my new friend from Ireland, Nialls'. He is an out and out stud. He just swam the English Channel in 15 hours a few weeks before and is a 2006 World Champion Age group Triathlete. Nialls was going to pace me the last marathon. He was all full of energy and it was contagious.

With 24 miles to go and with horrendous pain still going on in my feet. I decided it was time to go for another surge. When I walked or shuffled my feet hurt a lot!! When I ran they hurt like HELL!!! But at least it would be over quicker!!! I told Nialls no more talking I was going to focus all my concentration on forcing out the pain so I could run. When we first started running the pain was unbelievable!!! But I knew from previous experience at Badwater it would eventually numb and it did. We were running at between 9 to 10 minute miles. After 4 miles, We were coming up to tent city for the 2nd time and Nialls asked me if we were going to stop. I said the only one word for the first time in 40 minutes." NOPE"!!! We continued on for 2 more miles and I ran a 10k in under an hour after 50 hours of racing. We went back to shuffling and walking. With Nialls continually telling me I had one more surge in me!!! With a little over 3 miles to go. I said what the hell lets go out in style!!! So I dug in Deep for one Last SURGE!!! We ran the next 2 miles at about 9 minutes miles. Then the last mile I gave everything I had left!!! After we crossed the line in 56 hours and 39 minutes. Nialls came up to me and he said you know that you ran that last mile in " 8 MINUTES!!!!".

At the award ceremony I was talking to Nialls and he gave me a compliment I will always treasure. He said "Bill, When I think of most people they are at this level and he put his hand at his waist. Then there are three or four people I truly admire and they are here and he put his hand at his chest. You are here and he put his hand over his head"!!! Thanks Buddy

I want to thank the 75 year old wonder Jim for coming out again and crewing for me. He battled through his own demons he fought food poisoning out there for much of the race. I never Knew how bad it was till after the race. One tough hombre!!!!

I want to congratulate Dan Jenson on becoming the first paraplegic to finish a triple Ironman. (Dan is missing one leg beneath the knee.) He was Nails out there!!! Another friend of mine Joshua Zitomer had his blood pressure drop so low during the bike that they brought in an ambulance to check him. They recommended he quit.. Instead he rested 4hrs till his blood pressure got back to an acceptable level and was the 10th and final official finisher!!! Dave Gaudette did not sleep the first night and on the run he got leaner's disease. This is where your core muscles give out on one side and you lean at a 45 degree angle. He walked for hours and hours with his wife supporting him till he finished!!! Also congratulations to Jane Kupkowski who although not an official finisher stayed on the course for 64 hours and 10 minutes till she finished!!! It was an honor to be around such determined and courageous athletes!!!! Thank you Steve (Race director) for bringing us altogether for this Epic Event and making us all feel like family!!!!

Thank you for your support!!! Show up and Suffer!!!! Bill