

Virginia Double Iron Tri by Shane Eversfield

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The weather at Lake Anna State Park in Virginia was absolutely perfect last weekend (08-10 October) for the [Virginia Double and Triple Iron Triathlons](#). The Triple began Friday morning at 7, the Double on Saturday morning at 7. Both events officially ended Sunday evening at 7. This was to be my first Triple, since I had completed the Double in 2007, and was eager to step into new territory.

Well, Divine Order always prevails! My lofty aspirations were whittled down a bit. Due to a "retired" car transmission, Betsy and I were unable to depart for the Triple on time. So, it was the Double Iron once again! In hindsight, this really was divine order. I was still recovering from a respiratory infection, and my training had been very casual and inconsistent since [Survival of the Shawangunks](#) - known as "S.O.S." - (a bike-run-swim-run-swim-run-swim-run triathlon near New Paltz, NY) held September 12th. Between TI Weekend Workshops (both US and Europe), a Teacher Training in Poland, the Minneapolis TI Coach Summit, and private lessons, Betsy and I have been on the road since 23 July! (We are looking to return to Lake Placid in early November.)

Zen swim: Water does not like to be pulled and kicked. Slip through with stealth. Be invisible.

The Double began at 7:06 with 15 competitors. The lake was glass smooth, with a light steam rising into the chilly dawn air. Sighting the buoys was a bit of challenge, but the steam disappeared as the sun rose. In my [2XU V:1](#) wetsuit, I swam the 12-lap 4.8 miles at a very leisurely pace, bilateral breathing all the way. As easy as it felt, I still emerged first out of the water. (My longest swim since departing Lake Placid in July was 1:10.)

Zen bike: A dynamic and harmonious relationship with your bike and gravity will bring to the gates of "velo nirvana".

Next up was 45 out-and-back laps for the 224-mile bike. I got in 28 laps before nightfall. (It's in the darkness that the intrigue rises during these eclectic ultras.) Temps dropped a bit at night, but the clear sky, speckled with stars on a moonless night, and a quiet unlit rolling country road within the state park made for a serene, passage. Just 15-20 cyclists going back and forth - the blue-white glow of small bar-mounted LED lights in front, the blinking red ones in back. Our remote turnaround was an orange cone with a blinking beacon, flanked by a lit canopy with a cheerful volunteer who acknowledged each athlete, each time, by name. (They were always so cheerful... Maybe it was the Red Bull.)

Then we disappeared back into the darkness, returning through the same surreal corridor, back towards the Very Center of Our Universe - the crew/transition/central timing area. This consisted of a row canopies on the shoulder of the road (one for each athlete and crew). Each canopy had a table cluttered with every imaginable kind of race nutrition (mine was exclusively [Hammer Nutrition](#) products - over 20 canisters, jugs and nutrition supplement bottles in total), bags of athletic clothes, shoes, and skin care products, as well as spare bikes and parts. Each canopy was occupied by one or more bleary-eyed, loyal-to-the-point-of-lunacy crew members in various states of altered consciousness and unconsciousness. (Keep in mind that the Triple Iron athletes and crews were now into their *second* night, though most of the athletes were now "running".) All this craziness was illuminated by a simple string of lights that ran down the front of the canopies, and enhanced (deranged?) by a stream of continuous music. (I recall songs like AC/DC's "Highway to Hell", and Talking Heads "Road to Nowhere" and "Water Under the Bridge".) And of course there was the 24-hour grill master who offered us

burgers, pancakes, bacon, eggs, sausages, etc. every time we rode or ran around the orange road cone at this end of the circuit. After another pass by the chip sensor, flashing another cartoon face at the timers, with a comment like "Oh yeah", it was back into the oblivion. Alternating between this carnival scene and the dark foreboding passage was like swinging on an emotional pendulum between the shadows of doubt and the radiance of euphoria.

(My longest bike ride was 114 miles, with 8200 of climbing, 10 September - two days before S.O.S. After that, I rode twice for 2 hours each time, and a few times on the stationary.)

Zen run: Just keep falling forward without tipping over.

I finished swinging on the bike pendulum around 12:30 am, feeling robust and ready to trot. My pace on the bike was very consistent, and I gave up only 3 or 4 places to the "younger bucks". Betsy had offered impeccable support throughout my ride - I never had to dismount completely from the bike (except to pee during the daylight hours). We pondered my rag-tag collection of ancient running shoes (18-36 months old) and picked out the battered K-Swiss K'ona's. She massaged my neck and shoulders while I donned socks and compression tights, and laced up the shoes.

The run of 26 out-and-back laps started well. I felt strong and kept a steady pace. Sometime around the one-quarter point (13 miles), I could "hear" my right Achilles tendon begin to complain. Yet, it held up well into the second marathon, as I was alternating running and walking. By the elation and sobriety of daylight, I knew that, just like my last Double, this would dwindle down to "damage control". There was no heroic run-through-the-pain. By lap 21, I conceded to walk the remainder, knowing I would finish (somewhat) gracefully, without any long-term injuries. I slipped to 9th place (out of 15) and finished in 32:39:55. However, throughout the 52.4-mile "passage on foot", I enjoyed and savored Betsy's company during 10 laps. Our companionship is priceless beyond the "cigars and accolades" of finishing ahead of my competitors.

(My longest run was 32 miles, with 3,000 feet of ascent on 16 September, 4 days after S.O.S.)

After all, competition is not "me against you", it's a *petition for companionship*! The eclectic scene of the Double, Triple, Quintuple, and (yes) [Deca Irons](#) is truly a brilliant petition for companionship!

Hey, I'm still walking, swimming and biking, and Betsy and I depart today for Coronado to lead a Teacher Training. I'm sure I'll enjoy a run while I'm there!

"Why?", you may ask. No, not for bragging rights. In life, *grace* is, for me, a supreme virtue. Ultra endurance training and racing always put me touch with gratitude and humility. In turn, gratitude and humility always lead me on a true path to grace and spiritual fitness.

To all of you, especially Betsy, I am grateful for your support. As with life, ultra endurance events are never a solo endeavor.

Namaste!

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