

“That ain’t being scared man. That’s anticipation. Use that to your advantage.” –J.E. Moreno, Esq.

With those last few words of support, I drew the curtains closed to all outside concerns and thoughts that could preoccupy my mind or shift focus away from the task at hand. I had set a goal so far beyond my comfort zone that I began to question my resolve.

I stood at the start line of the 2014 Virginia Triple Anvil (VA Triple), a triple Ironman distance triathlon. Broken down, I had sixty hours to finish three mega-components: 7.2 mile swim, 336 mile bike, and a 78.6 mile run. The fourth, unwritten component was the how-much-can-you-eat-to-keep-going-without-spilling-your-cookies contest. I have completed dozens of endurance events from ultramarathons to Ironmans, but this one had teeth. It was the first time I have felt so apprehensive about the undertaking.

Why did I sign up for this?

Rewind a few years, to the time when I stepped away from triathlons altogether. I had been frustrated with the effort I had put into them, and the mediocre performances that resulted. I was disappointed and decided to re-assess and pursue my first love: running...long. I set quite a few goals during the winter of 2013. Most of them would be realized throughout 2014. With a renewed sense of accomplishment and swagger, I started looking for the next big feat.

To be honest, I have always had a great degree of certainty (Badwater aside) in my ability to accomplish the goal, to finish the race, to tackle the challenge. This time, I was not looking for a sure thing. I wanted something that would really test me. I remembered reading about the VA Triple in 2010, when my active duty obligations prevented me from participating in the Ultraman Canada staged triathlon, as part of the inaugural year of our awareness campaign for the Semper Fi Fund [http://www.active.com/donate/SemperFiFund10/Marines1in10].

The VA Triple represented the abyss and a chance at failure. I wanted to know if I had it in me. I *needed* to know. And thanks to vetting through Steve Kirby (Kirb), Race Director and head honcho of USA Ultra Triathlon, and the benevolent support of **RuckPack** and **EraThr3**, I was able to come face-to-face with an unknown challenge.

Virginia Double IRON Triathlon
Virginia Triple IRON Triathlon
Course Map



Courtesy: USA Ultra Triathlon



EraThr3

Preparation

This type of event lends itself to months/years of preparation, given the magnitude required of each discipline. Unfortunately for me, time and life did not provide such luxury. I knew I would go into the VA Triple physically undertrained.

To compensate, I spent time training my mind to lock into a state of focus and stability, which I know are crucial in endurance races. I also front-loaded a few ultras in the earlier part of the summer and tapered off shortly after the beginning of August. Around that time, I increased swimming to roughly three days a week varying between 100 meters to 1.5 miles worth of steady state swims and speedplay, focusing on form. Thanks to my buddy, Justin Andrews, I squeezed in several 50mi(+) bike rides in the Carolina mountains.



Blue Ridge Parkway Struggle Bus Session

Courtesy: Seth Long

The last few months included several hot yoga/high-intensity circuit training sessions per week (courtesy of the instructors at **Arrichion Yoga in Charlotte**). Each of these disciplines helped acclimate me to bouts of discomfort—also known as “riding the struggle bus.” These struggle bus sessions helped me to establish thresholds to keep me within my limits on game-day.

Train, rinse, and repeat. Soon enough, I was driving up to the visitor’s center at Lake Anna State Park in Spotsylvania, Virginia.

The Mental Game

I had already chopped up the race into manageable sections and set worst-case scenario timelines. In order to account for prolonged rides on the struggle bus and still finish within the time limit, I did some calculations. It seemed ridiculous for me to be on a bike longer than twenty-four hours, and I knew I could easily run that far sleep-deprived (we’ll come back to that later).

In total, I decided I could feasibly swim for seven hours, bike for thirty-two hours, and run for twenty-four hours. Sleep and batteries not included.

The Gathering

Every time an ultramarathon is about to get underway, you can feel the gathering of the tribe. I’ve yet to find the right one word to describe it. The positive energy is palpable, living, and moving. Maybe I am just a neo-hippie, but I feel most alive when I’m with my people. People who share this passion and sense of dogged pursuit.

Debbie Sidel was the first soul I encountered. I noticed her finisher’s shirt from a previous VA ultra tri and we picked up immediately, as if we had known each other for years. Shortly thereafter, I would

meet Kirb for the first time after three years of email correspondence. He and his crew immediately made me feel welcome.

I met so many down-to-earth athletes willing to share their knowledge of the event and best practices towards successful completion. There's something truly special and collective about these events and these competitors.

The sun dipped low in the sky and we became blanketed in darkness as we broke bread with one another and listened to the words of Kirb. Eventually, we shuffled off to our respective patches of the park and began to make final prep for the following dawn. Unfortunately, most of the early evening hours were spent grabbing foodstuffs, drinks, and extra supplies from nearby stores. It would be midnight before I finally went horizontal for the last few hours of deep sleep that week.

Execution: Day One

Adult Swim

I camped out in my tent, which was setup directly behind my aid shelter and awoke at 6am to usual anticipatory race-day chatter. It was still dark, but the race would begin at 7am. I felt calm, knowing I had thoroughly checked and re-checked foodstuffs and race supplies the night prior.

While the VA Triple does a fantastic job of feeding athletes and crews around the clock, I felt more comfortable with nutrition that I used throughout training, so I loaded up on a PB&J and an Ensure while making my way down to the visitor's center. I spent quite a bit of time in the locker room for one last bathroom break (aka "getting my world together") and the application of TriSlide and BodyGlide to just about every crevice of my body. In the summer of 2007, I learned that after swimming a couple miles in the Russian River, the combination of water, sun, and form-fitting neoprene could bring about some unique chafing. At the last moment, I decide to abandon the Garmin watch and adopt natural timing for the event.



Out of nowhere I hear Kirb barking, "less than 5 minutes to start." Crap. **It's...about...to go...down.**

That Feeling

We gather for a group photo and wade into the waters. The sun is up now, glowing. As the morning mist rolls about the surface of the lake, it further evokes the sense of heading into the unknown. The water feels slightly cooler than the 45-degree air temperature. We look around and pass good tidings



The gang's all here!
Courtesy: Oana Rosu

to one another in the final moments of stillness. There are 13 other souls with the same goal—to push, push, push, and survive.

Without fanfare, the gathering crowd quiets along the lakefront and Kirb starts us off.

I place myself near the rear of the bunch to avoid being an obstacle for others and to slide into the Steady Eddie zone. I could best describe it as a mental state of awareness where the notion of time goes away with the exception of noting daylight and the motion of celestial bodies across the sky. In this zone, the goal to finish is in mind but pushed to the recesses in order to be in the moment and deal with the present: smooth strokes, calm breaths, the visual shift from murky water to sky, and the sounds of the heartbeat in conjunction with the sea state.

The course was a 0.4 mile out-and-back loop that we would traverse 18 times, with four buoys marking the route. The most difficult portion of the swim was not the length but the visibility of the earlier laps. With the angle of the sun peering through the trees and the mist still lazing on the surface of the lake, I had difficulty sighting in the early hours and seeing the third and fourth buoys coming and going. The one point of surety was a small pipe that was in our path at about the midway point, laid in a section where the depth was just shallow enough that you could swim it effectively, but would have to tuck your arms inwards to avoid hitting the pipe during the pull phase of the stroke. **Vasilias Toxavidias, Greyson Daugherty, and Bruce Allentuck** stayed together for a few laps helping one another stay on track and just doing simple check-ins. Laps came and went.



Smoooke on the waterrr.
Courtesy: Oana Rosu

Soon enough, I lost count. I had no watch. I let go of metrics and just continued to push.

I was fortunate to see **Debbie Sidol** at the end of each lap. In that instant, Debbie became a “Race Mom.” (For those unfamiliar, Race Moms/Dads are folks who look out for your welfare as if you’re one of their own offspring. Oftentimes, it’s just strangers that become friends and this sort of thing happens frequently in longer events.)

Each time I would reach the buoy, I stood up, grabbed a drink of Tailwind Nutrition, shook out my arms, and slid back into the water. From the corners of my eyes, I watched the sun trek across the fall sky.

After losing count of laps, I got antsy. By the angle of the shadows, I guessed it was a bit past noon and I felt as though I should have been done hours ago. I stood up and trudged around the buoy slowly, doing pacing math when I heard a voice yell out from the shoreline, “Hey! Getcha ass back in the deep end and swim! Those laps ain’t swimming themselves!” It was my buddy, Kam aka KamH2O (**Kimani Long**), showing up a full day earlier than I anticipated. What a relief!

In the same instance, I knew I couldn't let him down knowing how far he'd come to support the effort. Two more laps passed, and I was done with the longest swim of my life (total time: 5 hours, 36 minutes, 17 seconds). And how I loved that shower. I probably stayed in way too long (over thirty minutes in transition), but combined with some solid food, I was ready for the bike.

That Bike Ain't Gone Ride Itself

I'm going to be honest here. At this point in the event, I was thankful to still be upright and mobile.

And then, off we went on the bike. I could hear Justin's voice in my head reminding me to take it easy and conserve for the second half while leaving a bit for the run. It took a lot of willpower for me to not spin a bit faster. Surely, it would have led to an earlier decline.

I felt knew that others were concerned by my [lack of] speed in the first 100 miles. Something that **William IronOx Pruett** and **Bruce Allentuck** emphasized was the need to treat each iron-distance ride as three separate efforts and conserve for the last effort. The course consisted of 67 laps of a 5-mile out-and-back road across the park.

I quickly established the rhythm of the bike leg. Kam and I adjusted nutrition intervals with the passing of each hour. Every lap, I either had a bottle of water or Tailwind. One of my tasks was to drink the entire thing before returning to tent city. Every couple hours or so, I would eat a PB&J (shoutout to UnCrustables!) or down an Ensure.

If I needed an external, physical reminder of consistently, applied pressure, I looked to **Frank Fumich** and **Andrei Rosu**. These two gentlemen were the remaining competitors taking on the Quintuple (5X) Anvil challenge since Monday. I could not help but offer words of encouragement each time I saw them. If I was ever hurting, I knew they were in a place beyond my struggles.

As the dark settled in, every now and then I would allow myself to eat a packaged apple pie or a honey bun. I urinated every other lap and enjoyed a Numero-dos every several hours or so. Honestly, I stopped tracking it internally because I felt things were regular enough to not raise any alarms (%whiteboard).

The hours ticked and the miles rolled beneath my pedals. Leave tent city, up the hill, pass the gate, round the curve, round the curve, pass the guard shack, down the hill, turn at the timing tent, repeat in reverse. There was some comfort in that rhythm.



Still making progress with V-Tox.
Courtesy: Oana Rosu



Tent City-Home Sweet Home!

I was thankful to have the monotony broken up by moments of levity after meeting a gentleman by the name of **Beat Knechtle**. He is a doctor, from Switzerland, with a [resume](#) that displays why Beat is considered the grandfather of ultra-triathlons. I found myself trying to keep pace with **Beat** sporadically during the night. We exchanged pleasantries, jokes, and an occasional good-natured ribbing.



Dr. Beat
Courtesy: Oana Rosu

For the first time, I came to discover the joy in good-natured sh*t-talking. As I write this, the details are hazy, but I seem to recall **Beat** saying something to the effect of, “I know you can run. But do you think you can stand what I am doing to you on this bike?” I could not help but laugh and appreciate the lighthearted jabs in those otherwise lonely moments out there.

Regularity, Rhythm, and Reluctant Rest

There were constants I looked forward to: exchanging silly faces and sounds with **Beat**, **Dan Grodinsky** cracking a smile, **Kay Scott** following suit, **IronOx** offering words of motivation, throwing raspberries to **Robin Clark Cucinetta**, witnessing **Brad Kelley** hammer away with each stroke, and knowing a guaranteed laugh waited with Kam and Shane at the close of each lap. These men were my anchors.

It was 9:45pm-ish on Day One when I reached the 112-mile point on the bike. Things felt smooth, slow, and in control. That was until a few minutes after midnight. If you're unfamiliar with the feeling of running/biking at night, it is an invigorating rush. At the same time, it requires higher-than-normal focus than negotiating the same terrain during the daytime. At night, your world shrinks to the bright cone of light immediately in front of you. (In **Beat's** case, it extends in a 20-meter deep, 360-degree bubble of light around your bike. :-p)

Eventually, the Sandman hit me hard enough to cause me to swerve off the road and into the gravel a couple of times. As soon as I entered tent city, I slid the bike to Shane and told Kam, to make sure I was out of the tent in 5-10 minutes. Like clockwork, Kam got me up from my temporary slumber ten minutes later and threw a Gu or two at me.

A bit after 3:30am, the Sandman reared his head once more, this time pulling on my muscles until my body like 2-minute old Bazooka Joe bubble gum stuck to my joints.

Dammit. I could not ride through this. I made a pact with myself that this pause would be the last bit of sleep that I allow myself on the bike. Headfirst, I dove into the tent for a 20-minute quick nap. No sooner as I had laid my head down, I heard Kam shout, “HEY! GET YOUR ASS ON THAT BIKE! It ain't gone ride itself!!” I wanted to punch him in the baby-maker (kidding). But I was thankful in the same instance for the presence of Kam and Shane.

Day Two: New Day, New Faces

I continued to tally miles and consumed copious amounts of food and fluids as the sun rose and climbed higher in the sky. Then, it began its unrelenting descent back towards the horizon. I played math games

in my head guessing what mile I was on. Each time I asked Shane or Kam how much longer to go, or how many laps had elapsed, they gave an ambiguous reply or a flat out response to KEEP RIDING. Their strategy was the right one, keeping focused not on miles but on finishing. I am thankful they kept the cards close and the RuckPack closer.



RuckPack to the face!
Courtesy: Kimani Long

As the day progressed the Double Anvil athletes poured onto the bike course.

I was super-impressed with the speed and fresh looks on the course. Folks like **Erik Bergmann**, **David Jepson** (this cat is THE TRUTH), **Kirby Fanus** (fellow Marine), **Siobhan Maize**, **Stacey Shand** (Canadian-turned-honorary-Michigander), **Matt Smith** (motivation embodied), **Billy Collier**, **Josh Eckler**, and **Shangrila Rendon** stood out in my mind and were always GETTING AFTER IT every time we crossed paths—or rather, every time they flew past.

I was super-happy to see **Erik** out there. He and I had met at a running club in DC back in 2009. Very few of our mutual friends would even consider an event of this nature. But when we first talked about the Anvil races, I saw something in him click. It was fortunate timing that several years later we would share our first foray into this realm of sport.

In the middle of the day, I was blessed with the presence of **Rob, Kelly, and Baby Vivian Hillery** at tent city. The Hillerys made the trip down from Quantico for several hours to show their support and do some brief but meaningful catch-up. I was and remain thankful for their presence, which boosted my energy and gave me more reason to hustle out and back.

Truth be told, I doubt I would not have even been at the Triple if it were not for **Rob's** inspiration and example throughout the Semper Fi Fund "1in10" campaign and his accomplishments on the Ironman and Ultraman circuits. Unfortunately, clouds loomed overhead threatening to release another torrent of rainfall and we parted ways once more.

Riding in the Rain

I became cautious as the only "wet riding" I had done was with Justin and our buddy Seth Long through the fog-capped environs of the Blue Ridge Parkway summiting Mount Mitchell. As if on cue, the weather gods blessed us with a downpour that would last well through the night. Thankfully, I joined forces with **Robin**. She had oodles of energy and managed to share some. We ended up racing one another for a few laps up to what I thought would be my final lap. Unfortunately, I still had one more lap remaining, so we dialed it back and enjoyed a last go across the park together, soaking up the remnants of daylight.



Quintana Roo Kilo'in it
Courtesy: Debbie Sidol

I felt fortunate to be in such great company from the beginning. IronOx and Bruce's words stuck with me for the bike—treat it as three separate rides and hammer the last one home. Splits: mile 112 – 15:07:44 (elapsed clock time), mile 226 – 25:56:29 (same), mile 336 – 34:42:15.

Welcome to the Wheelhouse

Thankful. That was the one word at the forefront of my mind as I unclipped off the bike for the final time. With a little less than an hour to sunset, I changed out of my bike kit into a dry pair of CW-X tights and a 10-year old Brooks running hoodie. Shane and Kam were there, offering up an assortment of solid foods and much-needed fluids, which I gladly accepted.

My left knee was singing to me a little bit, but Shane helped take some of the pain away as he rubbed in a handful of BioFreeze. I took quite a bit of time basking in the moment of stillness before the last leg of this journey.

The young ladies crewing for an athlete at an adjacent tent were quiet and watchful until one piped up, “Why aren’t you out there yet?” I cannot recall if it was Shane or Kam, but one of them quickly let them know to stop worrying. This is the wheelhouse.

They were right. I felt increasingly confident that we would see this through to completion. Several minutes later, it was time to depart tent city via my favorite form of transportation – on foot.

The mantra in my head was “Just Go.” I needed to get back into a faster rhythm in order to complete the 39 laps and ultimately the event in under 60 hours. Each lap consisted of a 2(+)-mile circuit. A slight incline took us along the bike route to the gate for a bit over a half-mile. The remaining half-mile was an out-and-back leg to the checkpoint turnaround.

I just wanted to move fast, and it felt really good to succumb to that urge. Plus, it was good to give the old man (**Beat**) a reason to keep running hard. I had no idea of my progress, but simply wanted to hold down the gas for as long as I could. I chopped up the endeavor into repeats initially—no resting until seven laps were completed, no rest until another six, no rest until another five. I was still humbled by the efforts of folks gutting it out. I recalled pushing into the 8-minute mile range briefly attempting to keep pace with **Kathy Roche-Wallace** for a lap but dialed it down, knowing it would do me no good to burn out.

Everybody Playing Tricks on Me

Mother Nature must have had a sense of humor that night. She played with the dimmer switch as the rain went from heavy downpour to foggy mist, then back and forth. The low point came well after midnight, when I felt as if I was running/walking aimlessly, not unlike something out of *The Walking Dead*.

It was difficult to concentrate for too long on the environment, so I looked down at the road. The bumps, cracks, and textures of the asphalt road began to take on different forms and shapes. I saw faces of indistinguishable people, cartoon characters, and icons from advertising campaigns. That last one was pretty weird since I don’t own a TV. I looked up as I approached the gate and saw **Brad** and



The picture just looks fast.
Courtesy: Kimani Long

relayed my observation. I do not think I translated my thoughts into coherent words, because his reply was something along the lines of the ground being a perfectly good space for advertising.

In times of desperation, sometimes all you need is a little levity to perk you right up.

I picked up the pace for as long as I could until I came upon **Ryan Ravinski**. Only a few laps prior to seeing him, I overheard the time table volunteers say, "He could give Ryan a run for second if he continues to push this rate." Funny enough, I was less excited about tightening the race than about running with someone for a while. The company was truly a welcomed blessing. I was tired of running alone. I was tired of running. I was tired. So we walked for a while in the mist sharing stories.

Not everyone was running at that time of night. But **Siobhan** was crushing the shorter out-and-back, and I was anxious to kick it back up a notch. I took on **Siobhan's** strategy, and we ran together for a couple of laps.

Each time I departed tent city, I jogged until the incline became a bit more drastic, then shifted to a power-walk back to the turn-off at the gate with the faces swirling in the concrete. At the turn, I visualized a version of myself just ahead and running in different gear, like shadowboxing. Much love to Dan and Ryan for pushing me faster than I would have gone alone. Each out-and-back was a test to catch and pass myself, to keep moving all the way back down the hill to tent city.

I held this trend for the majority of the evening, until the sky opened up with a heavy deluge. I said a silent thanks to Mother Nature for timing her fury with another arrival back at tent city and sat down for a food break.

I was ravenous, devouring just about everything my crew handed me. This was not a part of the plan. This was not so smart.

The straw that broke the camel's back ended up being an Ensure. I could not handle it and almost immediately felt a drop in energy, as blood diverted from my leg muscles to my stomach to aid in the digestive process. Shane ran off to grab a cup of coffee and Kam tossed a blanket over me as I began to shiver.

I closed my eyes as Shane put a cup of coffee in my hands.

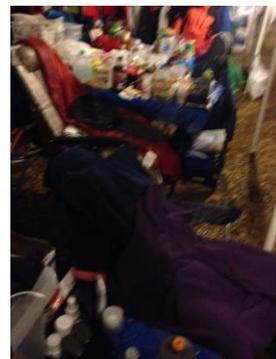
I recall taking a few sips and just staring into the darkness as the rain streaked off the tent. My eyes drifted to the contents of the piping hot cup. I got lost in the silence of a mind free from thoughts. I stared for so long that time seemed to drift slowly. The cup drifted out of my view just in time for Shane before to grab it before I spilled it all over myself.

Hot Coffee to the Face

I wake up and it is BRIGHT. It is so bright that I am momentarily wondering where I am until I realize that I am still sitting in the same chair underneath



Eat ALL the food.
Courtesy: Benny Shane



Sleep ALL the naps.
Courtesy: Benny Shane

the same tent next to the same guys that have been pushing me from the beginning. I was shocked and worried about how much time elapsed. I rose up as if coming out of a restful night of sleep and shaking off the dew of the morning dawn. Kam and Shane assured me the sun rose quickly. I felt like a new man.

As if connected by a mental tether, Shane magically delivered two cups of coffee. I took one and downed it as he continued to hold out the other. I asked, "What's the second cup for?"

He replied, "In case the first one doesn't take, you get the second cup to the face! Now get out there and get it done!"

You have to appreciate having guys like them in your corner to keep you moving.

As with the previous night, the miles flew by, and I got to share a few memorable ones with the rest of the competitors. **Paul Bedard** and I shared a couple laps and exchanged some laughs and gripes (forgive me Paul, as I did not know what *Gatorboys* was at the time). I really appreciated his humor out there.

The Bell Lap

The volunteers passed news that we could have a crew member with us for the last lap. With that, I extended the offer and Shane jumped aboard. I wanted to relay everything that I had experienced during the night prior, the points where I felt so down-and-out, the points where I found a surges of life, and most of all I just wanted to relay appreciation for making all of this happen and how I would miss and cherish this moment from here to the endgame.

As we ambled back to tent city, a volunteer passed me the American flag, and it seemed so fitting that Old Glory was there with me at the end as she has been from the beginning. I continued to run, confident that I would finish, but also confident that this was the hardest thing I'd ever done.

The finish was surreal. A light rain was in the air and the sky was bright. **Kirb** passed the official finisher's hammer and motioned us to strike the anvil three times to signify the ending of the adventure. With my remaining energy, I raised the hammer high and delivered two blows to the face of the anvil. Only fitting, I felt the last strike would be shared by the dudes who physically made it possible. So I passed the Longhammer over for a well-deserved strike.



Runnin' with Old Glory
Courtesy: Tim Strong



Longhammer: It's All Good, We'll Bring the Wood
Courtesy: Oana Rosu

Lessons Learned

An experience this long and difficult doesn't come without its hard-earned, hard-learned lessons. And far be it for me to keep those to myself. Should you ever take on a feat like the VA Triple, I leave you with some advice.

Swim

Nutrition worked well during this portion. Consuming liquid nutrition, via Tailwind, was much easier on the stomach while floating.

The only major hurdle was sighting. I had one open-water swim session over the summer, in which I used a different pair of goggles than the ones I used during the VA Triple. I would have been better off to practice with various lens tints could alleviate some of the sighting issues I experienced.

Bike

I did not have a light system setup on my bike until a few days prior to the event. I felt comfortable with my ability to see at night based on experience with overnight runs. However, it would be advantageous to get in a few night rides to gain increased comfort in the saddle at night.

Saddle matters – your seat can make or break the comfort of the ride. I've been riding with the same ISM Adamo saddle for the past seven years. It has worked well in providing enough surface area for the junk in my trunk and alleviating pressure on the perineum. Make sure you're comfortable with your riding equipment.

Bibs are not just for babies. I used pairs of bike shorts exclusively for years. That was up until Justin educated me on the important factor behind bibs: it *lifts* and *supports*. Imagine a one-piece track suit adorning the bodies of sprinters. A bib is similar and designed specifically for cyclist. I went for one ride and was a convert. Throughout the Triple, I stayed in the bib the entire time. It still smells...fresh.

Staying loose was important to setup a fluid run portion. Continuously stretching out the legs and upper body, in addition to the hydration/electrolyte piece, helped to avoid cramping on the bike and during the run.

Lube is, was, and always will be important. I used a combination of substances: BodyGlide on the known hotspot areas, DZ Nutz on the chamois pad of my bib, and A&D ointment liberally across the nether regions. Every 50 miles or so, I would thoroughly clean and wipe the area and reapply. Lucky me! No chafing issues arose during the bike or the run.

Run

Be adaptable. I had an initial strategy to run several laps at a time and take breaks in between each set. It did not work out as planned. So I adjusted and broke down each lap into components and things went much better. Breaking it down into manageable chunks and expending energy wisely—that's how you eat the elephant.

Training

Get the road miles in. Mountain biking and trail running can tax the cardio engine enough to prep the mind and the lungs. But the road can beat a body up. Getting sustained mileage on the pavement is critical.

It would have helped to go for a longer (100 miles +) ride at least once and follow that up with a slightly shorter ride. There was one back-to-back long ride weekend worked into the train-up. It was more of a mental boost to be able to deal with the next-day discomfort.

The most important component of training is the mental game. I recently became acquainted with an ancient concept called “misogi.” In essence, you pursue a quest well beyond your perceived limits. During this quest, you are immersed in physical discomfort, emotional distress, and thoughts of doubt. The aim of the quest is not success or failure. Rather, the goal is to be present in the venture, deal with the discomfort, find solace in that dark place and become comfortable there. The mind is sharpened through the experience of the “struggle bus” sessions. To be truly successful beyond the misogi, you will be able to reach back to that experience and dealt with present difficulties. The ultramarathons, the high-intensity training, and the hot yoga sessions symbolized touchstones enabling me to be successful in pursuing this journey.

Appreciation

There are so many folks to give appreciation to for supporting this effort and many of the ones prior to this point:

Kimani “Kam” Long, Benny Shane VanHoose – crew of the year. Thanks for the laughs and the kicks in the ass. Undoubtedly, a lot of the quiet work falls to the individual. When working in concert with a solid team, the effort becomes significantly easier. I owe you big, gents!

Justin Andrews, Seth Long, and Meredith Dolhare – beasts on the bike and solid endurance athletes on the whole. Thanks for pushing me on the summer rides. You taught me how to suffer better and renewed my appreciation for seeing the world on two wheels.

Steve Kirby and the USA Ultra Triathlon Family (to include volunteers, competitors, and support crews) – thanks for making the experience a great one regardless of the weather.

Steve Brown and the Ultraman Canada Family – for opening the door and introducing me to the world of ultra triathlons.

Rob Hillery and the Semper Fi Fund Family – without your support and existence, there would be no greater purpose.

Clay and Quinn Reynolds, and the Arrichion Charlotte Family – thank you for facilitating numerous struggle sessions in circuit training and hot yoga.

The Ultra Running Company, Inside Out Sports, Queen City Bicycles, and CLT running family – thanks for the knowledge, mileage, and resources, you have shared over the past summer. Nate, let's get some trail time in soon.

K. Conochan – thanks for being my editor-in-chief on-call and on point with the pen. Looking forward to your next adventure into ultra.

My family and close friends – thank you for the continued support to today.

D/W,

Mos

Relentless Daily Motion



The 2014 Virginia Triple Crew
Courtesy: Oana Rosu



Courtesy: Debbie Sidol