



Double Anvil ~ Race Report

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Race report

To start with, the pre-race prep was pretty challenging...It was hard to get ready for this race because I was not only packing for myself and the nutritional and clothing needs for a 36 hour race, but also for the kids as well. Ah the life of a mom:-)

Race morning started out well. I rode the race start with my friend Stephen while John let the kids sleep in a little longer. Once at the race site we set up my bike, pumped air in my bike tires, and got my water bottles ready. I didn't need to load down my bike with nutrition or water/Heed because I would be cruising through the 'tent city' every 5 miles. That took a lot of pressure off prepping for the bike.

After a [Hammer gel](#) and two [endurolytes](#), the swim start was pretty relaxed because I knew this was a long, slow, consistent swim race, not a sprint race. I knew I needed to get into a nice rhythm and was quickly able to do that. The race distance was 4.8 miles, 12 laps around the buoys. My plan was to swim '1 ironman' then stop, eat Hammer gel and drink and continue for another 2 laps, stop, etc. The lake was shallow enough that I could stand at the buoy and John could walk out to meet me. The kids loved that because they were able to yell encouragement every time I stopped.



(They also encouraged John and I to smooch when he met me with food and water.) I also walked briefly around the buoy each lap to get my heart-rate down. For the most part I felt great during the swim. I had a good groove for the first 2.4, but then my shoulder started hurting for the second 2.4. During that time I could only breath to the left and I had to be really careful about my arm placement. I was nervous that it would really start to bother me, but luckily I was able to adjust my swim so that it didn't get worse.

I was only the third person (out of 25) out of the water and I felt great! John, Stephen, and the girls were there to greet me and walk me up to the changing area and my bike. After a

quick change—slathering a lot of [Hammer Seat Saver!](#)—I headed off to start my 224 mile bike. It was just before 10am. The beginning of the bike was fine, although mentally tough. I had 45 loops to do on the bike so the first 10 or so laps seemed to take forever. Plus I drank a bit too much lake water and my tummy was no bueno. Again, I got into a groove and tried to pass the time singing parts of songs that I could remember. Sipping on [Hammer Perpetuem](#) helped fuel me and settle my stomach too.



However, this part was also tough because I was a fast swimmer, a number of people passed me on the bike....yuck. I had to tell myself to 'race my own race' and 'stay in my box' —yes I really said those things to myself and yes it helped!

Unfortunately the weather changed pretty quickly during the day, from partly sunny, to mostly cloudy, to light drizzle, to rain...and the drizzle and rain stayed the rest of the race.



Ugh. Bummer, but there was nothing I could do about it. Luckily I brought a lot of different cycling clothes for any type of weather so I was prepared for the cold and rain. The hardest part of the entire race came when the sun went down. I headed out for a loop and turned on my bike light. Quickly I discovered that it didn't do the trick. I couldn't see a thing! I was kicking myself for not investing in a really good light like EVERYONE else had, but at this point it was too late. The rain was coming down hard and I couldn't see anything. I totally freaked out. I slowed way down. I panicked. When I got back to the tent city I unleashed my emotions on poor John..... I was freezing cold and scared. We both kept our wits about us though, as I changed he looked for a headlamp I could attach to

my helmet. Once I was dry and warmer, we put the head-light on and I headed out again. The headlamp ended up working wonders and I was able to calm down and power on. I noticed that my bike speed slowed a good deal compared to during the daytime, but it was hard for me to remember to go faster in the dark. I'd get into a zone in the dark and have to remind myself that I was racing. During this time, John and Jason were real life savers—John still loved me even though I snapped at him (I did apologize a lap later:) AND he and Jason brought hot noodles in a cup and chicken broth. They tasted so good! And to top it off, my friend Gill made chicken stew that was also wonderful. I cruised on counting the laps; experiencing highs and lows as the laps dragged on. I finally got off the bike just before 1:00am.

I changed in a tent we had brought and started on the run around 1:15am. I was so happy to be off the bike that I started my first couple of run laps (about 2 miles each) way, way too fast. My goal was to walk a minute every mile. This goal lasted....um...a little while. I'm not exactly sure when I ditched this plan, but at one point I switched to running to different landmarks. This is where the mental part of the race became a huge challenge for me. I had

26 loops to run. My body was beginning to ache. My left knee started to bother me. My right shin was tender. I needed to keep up the run/walk. I needed to make myself run. The night seemed to last forever, especially because it continued to pour rain off and on. Another low point came just before dawn. I had a Sugoi jacket on due to the rain but I became overheated in it. When I came back to tent city, I told my friend Jason that I was overheating and needed to change. He thought I was nuts because it was so cold out. Then I started to wonder if maybe something was wrong with me. My mind was a little fuzzy and I was really warm...hmm. Did I need check in with medical? I decided to head out for another loop instead. And luckily on this loop it started to really rain hard. I say lucky because that helped to cool me down. I also realized that I was feeling loopy because I had been awake 24 hours! That realization really settled me down and I felt fine after that. Well, I guess "fine" is a relative term.... I knew I wasn't sick, but it was a battle to keep moving. Plus I'd had so much caffeine to stay awake that I had to stop to pee every lap...yes every lap. Sigh, I think overall I wasted 30 minutes in potty break time! Lesson learned.-(side note, no run pictures because, well, it was dark and raining for much of it:)

I was SO thankful when the sun came up. That lifted my spirits and I was finally able to connect with my fellow racers. In the dark I had no idea who anyone was around me because all I could see was their headlamp coming at me or their blinky light in front of me. As the sun came up, I started talking to people. We were commiserating about the race and I got to know a bunch of really cool people. I learned that there are amazing people out there doing amazing races. And throughout the whole night the race volunteers were GREAT! Always there to greet you at the turn-arounds with a smile, Heed, water, electrolytes, or whatever you might need. What a nice component to ultra racing.



As the loops and miles ticked by, I could not wait to see the finish line. I started walking more and running less. I probably could have run more, but mentally that was tough. Of course NOW I wish I'd been able to flog myself a bit more, but I know that you can't go back and wish more for a race. I gave all I had that day. At the start of my last lap, my family (John, Katherine, and Alexis) and my friends (Jason, Gill, and Jessica) came over to greet me and wish me well on my last lap. It was such an emotional moment for me as I

left tent city. Tears came to my eyes realizing what I was about to accomplish. It was a huge moment for me. It was months of dreaming and hours and hours of racing.

But I was about to DO IT. I was going to finish. I just couldn't believe that the moment was finally almost here. Then I sobered up realizing that a 2 mile run which normally would take me under 18 minutes, was going to now take almost 30 minutes...ugh.

I managed to finish in style though—first woman, fifth overall, and 3 hours ahead of the next woman. I didn't quite hit my 'pie in the sky' time goal of 28 hours, but I was close, 29 hours 7 minutes. But I did get to "submit a sample" for drug testing because I was the first woman..definitely another new experience for me!



Things I learned from this race: If I ever do this again, I need a much MUCH better light for my bike and I need to redo my nutrition 'plan'....Ok ok, I need to have a nutrition plan. Oh and Hammer Seat Saver was sent from heaven! Fifteen hours in the rain on my bike and NO CHAFING! Same goes for [Hoka ONEONE](#)..11 hours of running the rain—no blisters and I still have all of my toe nails!

Thanks for reading and Hammer On!
—Siobhan

