

“WARNING” - Super Long Triple Anvil Race Report Attached. Read at your own Risk!!!

Intentional Forward Movement and Be Resilient.
Triple Anvil Race Report – October 13th to 15th 2016.
By: Cole Braun

The Facts First: There were 8 competitors and 1 relay team in the Triple Anvil. I completed 421.8 miles in 57 hours and 29 minutes and finished 3rd overall. I slept for a total of 3 hours and 10 minutes over the 60 hours and drank approx. 40 bottles of liquid. The goal was to finish in under 60 hours and raise \$100,000 for HS kids who cannot afford lunches. We have currently raised over \$90,000 and expect to top this goal in the next month. It was the most challenging, longest, most tiring and most rewarding event I have ever been part of. I am blessed by God to be able to attempt this race, I am thankful to finish, I am honored to race with incredible athletes, I am thrilled to finish 3rd, I am lucky to race as part of my incredible team and I am humbled to help raise money for kid’s who need it. [#TripleAnvil](#) #421.8 [#USAUltraTri](#)

How did we get it done?: There were hundreds of people who supported this effort and contributed. My crew and my coach, however, are responsible for getting me to the finish line. I could not have come close to finishing without them. Coach Heather Haviland, you kept me on track and built a training program that was flawless. Jenny Braun, Mark Bahr, Clint Houchens and Paul Bahr were responsible for my nutrition, my race pace, my equipment and race gear and telling me I have to keep going when I wanted to just lay down and go to sleep. You all Killed it. My Physical Therapist, Andy Kerk, who is the owner of Body Mechanics started a Physical maintenance plan with me approx. 12 weeks prior to the race and was there (Without sleep for 60 hours) to adjust, massage and manipulate the parts of my body that were failing – that included my neck, shoulders, back, hip flexors, ankles, hamstrings, calves, feet, quads, core and bad headaches. Without your commitment to this event and without your talent this could not have been possible.

The “Real” Long Version race report: I raced the Double Anvil in 2014 and even though I struggled from the very start in that race (finished completely “wrecked” with 49 minutes to spare) I was very interested in attempting the Triple. I even left a space on my Double Anvil tattoo for the third Anvil. I really enjoy and appreciate the work that Steve Kirby, Teri Smith and Tina St Pierre do with USA Ultra Tri to make these events special. So 18 months ago I decided to tackle the Triple and knew that I needed to over-plan for every condition and possibility and that I need a Great Coach, a Great Team, and my PT out there at the race to try to finish this Triple Strong. My Son, Craig Braun, and I drove out to the Race last year to volunteer and to take notes on all the things that I would need to prepare for. I even recorded the sound that the timing chip made every time it recorded a lap and put it on my phone ringtone so I would be numb to it on race day. When we returned, I met with my coach Heather Haviland (She is a very successful Pro Ironman Triathlete who brings that same passion to her coaching) to lay out the plan. We landed on two words that became my Mantra for this event:

HAVE INTENTIONAL FORWARD MOVEMENT AND BE RESILIENT.

My 14 month of training for this event included over 100 miles of swimming, over 800 miles of running and over 5,000 miles of biking. The race checkpoints along the way were: Ironman 70.3 Galveston, American Triple T, Big Foot Tri, Ironman 70.3 Racine, 36 Hours of Triathlon Solo (250miles completed), Ironman Boulder and Ironman Wisconsin. The last month before the race was all about rest and repair so this 55yr old, recreation athlete, was as ready as possible.

We arrived at Lake Anna on Monday night and we just got settled so that Tuesday and Wednesday we could set up the pit, grocery shop, pick up the camper (for sleeping and showers) and test the equipment.

Race morning, we arrived at Lake Anna at 6:40am and got the photos and pre race announcements out of the way. We prayed as a team and fellow competitor, Dan Duran joined us. He is a great guy and we really loved connecting with him and his family. My plan was to swim 2 laps and then take on nutrition for the entire 18 lap swim. The goal was to swim in 5 hours. I felt great for the whole swim and was just in a zone with straight, long and consistent strokes. I swam 3 back to back to back Ironman swims in 1hr 29 minutes each for a total swim time of 4 hours 27 minutes. I was thrilled and a bit sore in my shoulders and my back. After a 20 minute transition, I rode the out lap and got to the Crew Tent where we took a 20 minute break where Andy worked on my body to get it ready for 27 hours of biking.

The plan for the bike was to try and ride a comfortable pace that would be about 15 to 15.5 mph and then take a 5 minute break every 1hr and 15 min. or 3 laps. That would get me about 225 miles before I would rest at about 3:00am. The first part of the bike was great. The weather was cool and I was feeling good. As night came; two things changed. It got cold, so I was bundled up with tights, a heavy jacket and Winter gloves - And, as it got real dark I started to get super tired. At about 11pm I could not stay awake. I would coast on the mini down hills and start to fall asleep because of my warm body, cold air on my face and the soft noise of the freewheel clicking. I would wake up when my bike started to wobble - that was making my lap times slow. I wanted to sleep. My crew reluctantly told me I was losing time and I had to pick it up. I don't know why or how but I said - OK - and my next lap was one of my fastest. As I came by the tents I barked out - I need Red Bull and Pretzels... And I was off. I rode strong until 3:30am. That night I also meet Joey Lichter. His bike was lit up like a Christmas Tree. It was awesome, and as I got to know Joey, so was he. Joey finished 2nd overall in 55 hours and 32 minutes. As I woke up at 4:45am, I got back at it. Having the sun come up for the second day was a huge help. A steady dose of Roctaine Endurance, Eggs, Pretzels, Red Bull, Peanut Butter sandwiches, avocados, Mac and Cheese and Fruit did the trick along with Andy's treatments. I got off the bike in 27 hours and 40 minutes. (if you take the rest times out I did three Ironman Bike Rides in 7hrs and 30min. each). I took a long shower, regrouped and set out on the 78.6 mile run.

It was 4:15pm on Friday when I started the run, so I felt pretty good about getting to the half way point on the run before I slept for the second night. The run loop was 1.7 miles and we had to do 45 laps. There were lots of rolling hills and a big hill down to the turnaround. Targeted lap times for me were 28 minutes. Running after all of this is tough. A lot tougher than most would think; and tougher than I even planned for. The plan from the start was to run 30 steps anytime I felt I could and then walk. So for the next 78.6 miles that is what I did. Run 30 steps and walk. Some laps were great and some were slow. It was warm (70's) and my stomach was rejecting just about everything. Yogurt, Chocolate Milk, Pudding, Jello and water were the only foods I could handle. I was on pace and gaining a bit of time over my 24 hour run goal until night hit again. I got to see some amazing athletes on the run and got to meet more. It was great to cheer on Will Turner, Dan Duran, Joey, Josh, Laura Knoblach, Michael, Paul Bedard, Dave Jepsen, Vasilis, Lisa, Chip and others. So when the second night came it got crazy. Most athletes were hallucinating. Some were seeing the lines on the road forming words. Others were flying and for me it was just like I had too much to drink. I was constantly dizzy and could not focus. If I turned my headlight on I got dizzy. If I turned it off I would fall asleep. I tried everything and once again tried to convince my crew that I REALLY needed to sleep - about midnight. My Crew walked with me, told me I had to keep going and would not let me off the hook until we got to about 4:00am and had 22 laps completed. After my short sleep we were on the home stretch. The sun was coming up - I had Warm Scrambled eggs, I was feeling good and I only had 39.1 miles yet to run. The next goal was to get to 1 marathon left to go. The weather was getting warm and at 9:30am I was at the one more marathon to go mark. YEA - Let's get this last Marathon in 7 hours. It was interesting that at just that time I realized that I might be close to a podium spot. 3rd place overall. The 51 yr Old Ex Marine, Tim Robert was a machine and won in 47



hours. Joey was talking and laughing his way to second at 55 hrs and 30 minutes. Josh Hageman and I were within about 8 minutes of each other with 26 miles to go. I think we both realized it at the same time as we actually RACED each other for the next 2 ½ hours. It was great because it took my mind completely off the fact that I had 7 hours left to go. My pace went from 17:09 down to 13:02 per mile for the next 13 miles. Josh battled too and in the end I was able to gain about an hour advantage. It was great racing against but more importantly racing with Josh. He is a great athlete and competitor. For the last 5 hours, my feet and hamstrings were on fire. With a couple laps to go, my crew told me that Dan Duran was close to missing the cutoff. I decided that I would take a whole lap and pray constantly for strength for Dan to go fast enough to finish under the cutoff. I told him what I was doing and to get after it. I think trying to focus on other things at that time was powerful for me. We were all encouraging each other, cheering for each other and pushing each other. We were all hurting and all chasing the same goal. Intentional Forward Movement. On the last lap I turned around for a few steps when Dan ran by the other way and I ran with him. I told him that I believed that he could do it and

too DIG DEEP. Dan finished with 11 minutes to spare. As I came to the finish line - I had a tremendous amount of emotion that flowed out of me. The finality of the finish. The culmination of 2 years of planning and training. The joy of finishing and sharing it with my wife, Jenny, and my crew, and the release of the stress of realizing that I ACTUALLY finished. Humble, Thankful, Blessed, Overwhelmed, Exhausted, Joy and fulfillment were the emotions that were flooding out of me.

My thought for today: CREATE INTENTIONAL FORWARD MOVEMENT & BE RESILIENT.

Have an amazing day.

Cole

