

## Race Report ~ Ruth Sleeter

### Virginia Double ANVIL Triathlon October 14/15, 2016

I've struggled with this race report. There is both so much to share, and so little. Sorry it is so long. The short version is:

Swim - Fun.

Bike - More Fun. Dark. Like a Video Game. Dizzy. Unicorn Tears. Done and didn't hit any runners - phew.

Run - Fine, Less than Fine, Uh, this is hurting, Uh, OUCH, almost pass out, suck it up, ouch, suck it up, finish.

“My Dog ate my Garmin – Going 0 Ft”

So first thing is first. There wasn't a minute of the 35 hours this race ended up taking that wasn't due to my awesome crew. Jake, Stephen, Tawnya, and Chrissy were the lynch pins in this ridiculous adventure. Keeping me healthy, fed, watered, warm, and moving. Oh yes, and inspired. Jake, my husband dealt with OCD training, running my long runs with me, and preparing ice baths, food, etc after long days, and being gracious when it was all I could talk about. Stephen, the evil genius of the coach laid out the plan, then with every obstacle, or every worry, he countered with a positive statement. He set the tone for this race. Keep moving, don't get in my own head. My crew did \*everything\* for me besides move. They thought, they suffered, they problem solved. They did it, I just moved.

My goal was simple, it wasn't to finish (of course, I wanted that badly) but more importantly, to be positive the entire time. To not get down on myself, the race, the situation, anything. This was the only way I knew I could finish, and to me, the mental victory was more meaningful than the physical. I knew I was going to have the honor of watching extraordinary people do some extraordinary things, but I had no idea just how amazing this would be. Watching these people, talking, cheering, participating with them, that is what made it a positive experience; that is what allowed me to stay positive. We all needed it on the course, we all needed the support, and we all freely gave it. It was just amazing to share time and space with these people. It propelled me forward, even on the sorest of feet. Amazing.

With all of that said, it is time to jump in a lake. With my longest swim at 3 miles, and a pool swim, this was uncharted territory. My strategy, goof off (this will be a theme). 12 laps was totally doable, I stopped every few for nutrition and hydration. Had a few great chats with folks at the raft which floated our food. I found out that waffles freeze in the cold, thus are hard to chew. I tried my hardest to do something moderately amusing at the end of each lap. The last few got a bit mentally hard, it was tough to see the last buoy, but just kept going. I assumed this little adventure would take 3.5 hours, it took me 2 hours and 59 minutes, so off to a good start!

I ate food and changed, again, with great crew help. I was dizzy out of the water, but that resolved itself quickly, so now it was time for a little bike ride! The longest I had ridden was 140 miles, so I assumed this would get tough at some point. I had done all my training in 95 degree heat, it was 55 out. Oh, and this was an out and back, so I'd have to turn around 80 times. Maybe sometime in those 80 turns I'd learn how to corner my bike? Maybe? The goal was not to stop, and not stop I did. I think I put my first foot down at 115ish miles, maybe shorter. My dog ate my Garmin the week before, I had a new Garmin, but it was on trainer mode, so helpfully it was telling me I had gone 0 feet. Even my OCD data self was able to let that go. I pedaled, my crew got me everything I needed, I cheered other athletes, dorked around, and just enjoyed the day. I never got warm, but never got freezing. We stopped to put lights on, and some warmer clothes, and kept going. At some point things got bad with an electrolyte imbalance, I got very very nauseous and dizzy. The Crew comes to the rescue again; talks to the doc, Jade. Jade was many

people's hero's over this week, mine included. She wisely figured out the problem, and gave a new drink for me to use, which immediately solved the problem. I knew something was up because the crew wouldn't tell me what it was (they thought I'd hate it), so I referred to it as Unicorn Tears. It was magical. It got dark, and a bit crazy making trying to avoid the runners on the course. I decided it was like playing a video game (Frogger), and went about peddling. I had memorized every nook and cranny of the road, so just rode the line I knew wouldn't meet my demise. There was a cone protecting us from a hole in the road...he became a good friend; we had nice discussions every time I passed. I'd say this was due to the fatigue, but who are we kidding, I always talk to inanimate objects. It is who I am. My crew seemed happy with my pace, I figured I must have been on pace to finish in about 16 hours, 17 was my goal, but Stephen thought 16 was possible. With 6 laps to go I was told I was doing great, to keep it up, and I did, a little dizzy but did it! I was so happy to get off the bike, not because it hurt, or wasn't fun, but it was so stressful worrying about hitting the runners on the course. Turns out it took 15 hours, I was amazed, but I knew the hard part was to come.....2:00AM, lets go run 52 miles!

The longest I've run is a marathon, and only twice at that. My competitors are these amazing athletes that have done tons of stuff, so I knew I was out of my league. I happened to be 2nd off the bike, which I didn't believe at the time. But I knew what was about to happen, but I didn't quite understand it. The night made me dizzy, but as soon as I ditched the headlamp I was better. I shuffled some and walked some. My ankles felt awful off the bike (one had already started bugging me on the bike), but soon they loosened up and stopped hurting, except for my anterior tib, who would turn out to just stop working at some point. But, the goal was to just not stop. Folks would run by, I'd walk. I'd try to crack a joke or cheer, and that was it. Just stayed positive. The first marathon was fine, then things started to get hard. Blisters formed, but I didn't know it because I didn't really feel them until it was too late, ankles started to object, feet hurt. I had the honor of really getting to know a few of the athletes out on the course. A few of the guys were so amazing, they walked with me, keeping my pace up and going. I can't say how much this meant, it was lonely and hard out there. Plus, at mile 30 or 40 I got to have a great political debate! They kept telling me I was 2nd overall, I kept not believing them, and telling them to race harder cause that didn't make any sense at all! Things got tough in the last 10ish laps. I stopped to get the blisters dealt with and almost passed out, so we fixed blood pressure, glucose, and intestines. At 5 laps to go I burst into tears, the pain was overwhelming, but compression, a discussion with Jade, Jake and Stephen, and I was off again. I was convinced I couldn't finish on time, they explained that I was wrong, so I guess there was no choice. Folks passed me, I was so happy to see them feeling good it made me feel good. Get thee down the road and back up it again. I was living for that last lap where your crew could walk with you. Suffering alone was tough, but I really just wanted them to experience the finish line too, since they were the ones that got me there. I sat down (excluding porta potty issues) 4 times in 35 hours.

I finished. But more importantly, I met my goal. I stayed positive, I never turned inward, I never went negative. In just shy of 35 hours I went 281.2 miles. And now I want to know what is next....