

I Survived

A Run Oregon recap of the 2015 Oregon Anvil

Written by Bad Ass Single Anvil Athlete Teresa Wymetalek for her Run Oregon Blog Feature 29 July 2015



ANVIL- where Iron is forged.
(Photo Courtesy of Teri Smith)

I'm not usually a drama queen, but I needed a crown and sash for the week leading up to the [Anvil Triathlon](#). When I'm nervous I'm either silent or a complete chatterbox and, unfortunately for anyone near me, this event created the latter. I talked, texted and emailed non-stop about my impending death. It wasn't that I wanted sympathy or that I really thought I was going to flat-line, but I just couldn't control myself. Agreeing to 140.6 miles months ago seemed like a great idea and I even had a family meeting to

make sure everyone was on board. Then, life got in the way- boys needed rides, friends had birthdays and I found myself guilty for training versus spending time with people. I made the obvious choice, push forward regardless, but continue to obsess about it. I even emailed the race director and noted that there was no way I could make the time cutoffs with my training, but that I wanted to just do the triathlon as a long workout. It didn't help my nerves that everyone kept telling me that I was totally capable of this, even my boys acted like it was just another event. It was all pressure I was putting on myself and, like most worry, it was a huge waste of energy.



Co-Race Directors Teri Smith and Steve Kirby at the pre-race dinner/briefing

I showed up to the pre-race dinner at Hagg Lake where we dropped off bikes and set up a transition camp. I had been chatting online with Steve Kirby, co-race director with Teri Smith, for months and when I went to shake his hand, he greeted me with a big hug. That was the first indication that Anvil wasn't a typical triathlon and their athletes weren't average either. I was only doing the Single Anvil, but most of the participants traveled to Oregon for the Double Anvil- a 4.8 mile swim, 224 mile bike and 52.4 mile run. I was definitely out of my comfort zone and way out of my league with this group, but they were warm and welcomed me in, ignoring that I was completely inept. After dinner, we had a meeting to go over course details, time cutoffs and safety concerns. I listened while staring at the buoys in the

lake and asked everyone around me if it really was four times around the buoys, thinking *that* I might just be able to do.

I didn't sleep a lot the night before, not because I was up packing, but because I was up double and triple checking everything. A little sore throat and some wheezing had me really second guessing this whole thing, but there was no way I could back out this close. Arriving at the transition area, it was buzzing with excitement, everyone was busy preparing in their own way. I kept thinking I must be missing something, because I was as ready to go as I was going to get and just needed to get my wetsuit on.



Oregon Anvil Start at Hagg Lake
(Photo Courtesy of Alexandra Pallas)

At 6:45AM we met along the shore for a few pictures. I was trying to relax, unsuccessfully. At 7AM they played the National Anthem and this was one of my favorite parts. I was scared I wasn't even going to finish this race, but looking out at the athletes and support crew with it playing somewhat calmed me, for the moment at least. It reminded me that whether or not I



National Anthem prior to race start
(Photo Courtesy of Alexandra Pallas)

finished this swim, bike, run thing, I lived in the best country in the world and had a whole lot to be grateful for. Goggles on, a quick prayer to 'not die' and Teri blasted the air horn. I know I squealed a little as my feet kept sliding in the slimy mud. I didn't know at the time, but that mud would end up being my favorite thing of the swim.

The first lap I got into a decent rhythm, bilateral breathing and pretty relaxed. Coming back from the first lap, I was starting to get a little fatigued. I paid for college by lifeguarding, so I was hoping that would help. Unfortunately, that was a long, LONG time ago and while you don't

forget how to swim, you must practice if you want to stay in shape. I did a little backstroke, a little breaststroke and was simply trying to survive the four times around the buoys, or 2.4 miles. I wasn't sure if my wheezing was from a bug or that my wetsuit was too tight, so I decided to take it off the last lap. You could smell the mud as you came closer to shore and it was the best smell ever, I knew another lap was done and eventually it meant I was finished and on dry land. I never thought I'd be so excited for the mud at Hagg Lake, but I most definitely was and it was a huge relief to be done with the swim.



Photo Courtesy of Alexandra Pallas

Even though the water was warm, I tend to run cold. I was shivering and my teeth were chattering when I headed out to transition. I grabbed my padded skirt, jersey and helmet and headed out to start the loops. For the single, we had a total of 10 (plus a little) loops around the lake. Ten. Loops. I became very familiar with the locations of the hiking trails on the side, had two hills that I hated, other hills that I

disliked and was super concerned I'd be chaffed from the 112 miles in the saddle. Truthfully, I was not thrilled at the idea of loops. Just like I was Rainman with packing and double checking, that carried over with my counting.

Each loop you passed the timing pad and, fortunately, they were kind enough to update me every lap. Most loops I ran to the bathrooms and grabbed some food. I'm usually a camel, but since this was the longest event I'd ever done, I wanted to make sure to stay hydrated, which meant extra potty stops. Fortunately, Hagg Lake has flushing bathrooms, which is a huge bonus. I probably wouldn't have made quite so many stops had I known that a flat tire would add to my triathlon experience.



Double Anvil participant Mark Blore leaving the bike transition.
(Photo courtesy of ALD)

Not paying enough attention, I hit a decent sized pothole and was super excited it didn't make me crash, not even thinking it might still cause other problems. Coming in from the 7th loop, another participant noted my front tire was looking low. Being the most unobservant person on the planet, I was so grateful he noticed and even more appreciative that he let me know. When I pulled into the transition area, I hollered for a bike pump and explained the dilemma. The crew there reminded me of a scene at NASCAR, if I watched it. They pumped it up, grabbed some soap and ran it around my tire, looking to see if there was a leak.

Anvil is like family and they take care of each other. The guy who had told me my tire looked flat warned them about it when he came in, so they were prepared for me. Not only do they watch out for each other, they take care of each other. Jean, a Double Anvil participant, unfortunately, had to drop out after a rough swim. Instead of moping like some of us would do (hand raised), she quickly transitioned from participant to crew member without missing a beat. She offered me her tire to save me time and I was honestly touched that this complete stranger would do that for me. That's what this group is like- they look out for each other, take care of each other and challenge each other all at the same time.



I headed out for my 8th lap thinking my tire was fine. Without any bubbles, we assumed it just lost air when I decided to get fancy and trick ride over a pothole. Fast forward another 4 miles and I realized that wasn't the case. I definitely needed a new tube and before my next long course triathlon I will practice changing my tire and hope to get it down to 30 minutes, which would be an improvement.

New tube, I felt the pressure to speed it up a little. No more

stopping each lap to grab food and say hello to the crew, I needed to focus. Teri reminded me that I had plenty of time, but needed to start paying attention for deer crossing the road. While I

couldn't help but wonder if that stemmed from my pothole mishap, it was just one more example of this group watching out for their family. Crossing the pad for your final lap, you hear an old fashioned telephone sound. I loved that ring and it gave me a little rush of energy knowing I was going to finish the bike segment, realizing this 140.6 mile thing might not kill me after all.

Coming in from my bike portion, my girlfriends Kristin and Shelly were there to cheer me on. I felt bad I couldn't really hang out and chat, since they had driven all the way out to see me and Kristin had spent a good portion of the day making sure I had food and water in between loops. Instead, I chatted as I changed into running gear. It felt so good to take my cycle shoes off and put on new socks, it's the simple things in life. New socks, shoes and running gear and I headed out to start my 20 loops.

I dreaded the idea of loops, but actually decided that I loved it. For the bike, I was never that far from help and with the run, it meant I had water and aid every 1.3 miles, as I ran through camp. I had a hard time keeping track of the bike loops and an even harder time keeping track of my running loops. Fortunately, the Anvil crew was awesome and accepted that every time I ran by I would ask what number I was on.

I grew to love the loops, but never developed an affection for the super steep climb as we headed out of Boat Ramp C. It was pretty much running a marathon with hill repeats, a huge hill to start off, a medium hill partway in and a hilly path coming back. People were tracking the laps at camp and where we turned off at the trail. I quickly ran out of funny quips to share with the crew at the trailhead, but they seriously kept me going. Their cheers and the dive-bombing bats, that is.



One of many loops.
(Photo courtesy of ALD)



Angie Gerber on a loop.
(Photo courtesy of ALD)

The first half of my run was in daylight, but the second half was in the dark. The stars were spectacular out there, without the light pollution we have in the city. I was startled several times with, what I thought were big moths. The further I got into my run, the more I questioned the size and movement of these ‘moths’. They were huge and appeared to be dive-bombing at bugs in front of my headlamp. Even in my fatigued and delusional state, it occurred to me that they weren’t moths, but bats. I ran a little faster until my last lap.

For your last lap you have to run it “backwards”. When I first read this tradition, I thought NO WAY am I running backwards with fatigued legs. The last lap is run in the reverse direction (not literally “backwards”) and it’s actually quite fun taking the course from a different perspective. I had the excitement of running it in reverse and running into a deer for the final lap too. I’m not sure who was more frightened. The deer froze, staring at my headlamp and I tried to decide if I should just keep running and risk scaring the poor thing further or wait until it scampered off.

I love deer, but I think this guy weighed almost as much as me and I was worried that if I made him panic he might accidentally kick me. I know it’s not rational, but I had been moving forward for 17 hours and I don’t think I was reasoning properly. Fortunately, the giant galloped off and I continued on the path, elated at this point that I was going to finish.

As I jogged into Boat Ramp C, the Anvil crew was waiting with the American flag, passing it off for me to take the parking lot circle one last time to the finish. The National Anthem played as I crossed the finish line and I can’t describe that moment, even after having days to process it. They told me the clock kept going until I struck the Anvil, a part of the finishing ceremony. I grabbed the hammer and gave it a tap, still not even close to processing that I had just finished. They offered to grab my timing chip, in case I couldn’t bend over, but I felt surprisingly great.



Teresa Wymetalek, Steve Kirby, Angie Gerber.

(Photo courtesy of ALD)

Offering to help with my timing chip was just one of the many ways the Anvil family offered to help. Throughout the day, they were there for support and it definitely helped me get through the miles. Passing out sunscreen to save my skin, spraying me down with Kool-n-Fit when I looked

overheated, giving me watermelon just when I needed it and reminding me that I could finish this swim, bike, run thing. [Anvil triathlon](#) was certainly a challenge for me, especially since the majority of my 'training' was inside a group exercise studio, but it's definitely attainable. Even though the course is a beast, I would still argue this is the perfect 140.6 to start with for anyone considering a long course triathlon. There aren't all the fancy things you get with a trademarked 'Ironman' but I'd take the heart of this one over that any day. Anvil encourages every athlete, offers support like no other event and welcomes everyone willing to give it a try. I was just going to check this one off my bucket list, thinking I would only tackle this distance once, but Anvil changed my mind. I will be back out there next July to swim, bike and run again and probably the July after that. It was a long and tiring day, but the memories and friendships are priceless.

About Teresa Wymetalek blogger for Run Oregon - a community blog site

I love anything and everything related to health and fitness! I teach group exercise and do small group personal training when I'm not cleaning up after or shuttling three boys around. I run to clear my mind, keep my sanity and stay connected with friends. I'm still working on teaching our dog, Autzen, proper running etiquette. Half Marathons and Triathlons are my favorite events and I watch a whole lot of soccer.