

Ironman Hawaii 2005 Race Report

On a day when the ocean swim was extremely aggressive, the winds noticeably absent on the bike, and the sun very present during the run, Ironman Hawaii 2005 gave all, competitors and spectators alike, a great day to remember.

I've been saying that it was wonderful to be part of the making of history on the 2005 racecourse. At the awards banquet we were told that 16 new age-group records were made – evenly split between men and women. We experienced a race where the oldest and youngest male and female competitors finished the day (80 and 19 on the men's side, and 75 and 21 on the women's), where four of the five hand cycle athletes completed the day – including Marc Herremans' triumphant return (a former pro who placed 6th overall in 2001 only to become paralyzed in a training accident). All visually impaired athletes finished the race, as did the very first female amputee to compete in Kona.

Going into this race I'd had a successful season with a 3rd AG place finish at the Florida Half Ironman, and a 1st place finish (both in my AG and overall female) at the ITU Long-Course World Championship in Denmark. A bike accident at the end of August put me in an arm cast for a week, and virtually stopped me in my tracks not being able to run or ride for a number of weeks. At this time my friends kept me going and focused on getting healthy while maintaining some fitness – a big thank you to all of my training partners and other supportive friends!

Pre-Race Week

The week leading up to the race was busy as usual. It was really great to have my extended family around to share everything with – Melissa and Urs (who were on their honeymoon), my sister Kathryn and brother Gordon (who arrived a day late after an unscheduled trip to the dentist to pull and abscessed tooth).

It was also really great to have added Canadian support from my friends Paul Clarke (Mr. Super-Sonic) as well as John Murray and Dona Andela (happy wedding!), all who arrived in Kona fresh from competing in the ITU Olympic Distance World Championship in Honolulu. With all of these folks, as well as family and friends of other Toronto area athletes completing in Kona – including my training partners and friends: Tara Norton, Adam Dunn, Deb and Dan Moore, Seanna Rishor, - there was a HUGE Canadian contingent.

Here's me and Norm hang'n at Lava Java



Race Morning

I had a great sleep on Thursday and Friday night, so was feeling pretty good on race morning. By the time I'd done my 'wake-up' run and had my breakfast (yum...cold pasta and chicken...), I made it to the parking lot of the King K hotel by about 5:15 – off my goal of 4:45... (ok...I know, a goal time for check in is a bit obsessive). Body marking turned out again to be a BIG event, as it took the volunteers at least 10 minutes to get my numbers on. They put the number 3 backwards on my arm THREE TIMES!



This year the transition area (both T1 and T2) changed locations to accommodate the new swim exit – moved to the same side of the pier as the swim start. A large set of stairs was constructed to go over the small set of concrete steps that lead into the water. While the new set up worked well, transition didn't go all that smoothly...more on that later.

Swim – 1:06:12 (11th AG)

Wow – chaos is all I can say. I can't remember a swim start so rough...and I generally like an aggressive swim. I got a really hard smack to the side of the head...I've yet to figure out if the person who hit me was a hand-cycle athlete or just someone 'special' as this person had a different colour bathing cap on – sort of dark purple – man did it hurt. More knocks and kicks... all par for the course. I felt like I was having a good swim on the way back as I seemed to bridge a gap between two swim groups, but on exiting I saw that my time was actually pretty similar to the past three swim times on at this race.



T1

On exiting the swim I heard my name from behind...there I saw my friend Jamie Roth from Alberta...and just beside him was Seanna! It was pretty cool to see two friends finishing at the same time as me. Into the change tent – dump out my bag...and there was all my stuff, MINUS my sunglasses! The only thing that I can figure out might of happened is that when I dumped my bag that the glasses – in their case – rolled somewhere, and I couldn't see them anywhere. Luckily, the nice volunteer lent me her 'Kona drug-store specials'...and out onto the bike I went (this made for very ugly bike photos – as you can see below, but man I happy to have my eyes protected!).

Bike – 5:41:16 (16th AG)

What can I say...we were really fortunate this year to have virtually NO wind on the bike – the cross winds were noticeably absent, the tail wind from Hawi was not crazy, and the head wind on the way home was pretty manageable compared to years past. One thing that was different was that EVERYONE was pretty serious. I tried to play the game 'who is the first pro we are going to see' on the way up to Hawi, but no one was having it. I guess folks were wanting to take advantage of the good condition to bring in some killer bike times.

My level of fitness (A.K.A. lack-of) was evident to me around 4.5hrs into the bike. I really had a tough time staying focused on the ride at this time as we were on the straight section of the Queen K leading back into Kona.

T2 – sort of quick change – still no sunglasses in my bag, but luckily Carolyn (another Chiro from Montreal) traded-up my drug-store specials, and I she gave me her sunglasses – way more appropriate for running, and photos!!

Run – 3:52:19 (17th AG)

I have to admit, I was really glad to be running. The bike was more challenging for me this year, despite the lack of wind, and I was really happy to finally be in a great pair of shoes that really suited me (THANKS Pearl Izumi for the sponsorship!).



It felt REALLY hot this year – I especially noticed the sun on the way back along Alii Dr. I was sure that my left ear would be blistered by the end of the day...but it wasn't and I was able to keep to my pre-race goal of not walking – except for Palani Rd ;) which was Killer! I did manage to pass my friend Jaimie, who said he'd been waiting for me....'to pass him'.

I wasn't sure how things would go due to my injuries, but I had worked hard on my run this year, and I tried to stay positive that my pre-race conditioning would help me. In the end I think it must have as, despite my injuries, I was able to have a slightly faster run split than in 2003!

My family was parked outside of our condo – which you pass twice on Alii Dr. This meant that I had about two really good portions of the run, as I tried my best to 'show off' on the way by. The 'Humphrey' cheering capacity/volume of my brother and sister (yes, they are just a loud as me) was much appreciated, and I could hear them long past being out of sight.

Finish – 10:47:06 (14TH / 64 AG)

I couldn't believe how long those last 4 miles went by...and wouldn't you know it, with just 3 miles to go I was passed by one in my AG, and then with one mile to go, another.... – it was only later I found out that this gal was the cousin of my friend Maureen...

But...true to form, I 'cleaned-up' for the finish line and crossed hand in hand in hand with my brother and sister! Yahoo!!!



THANKS

Jan. to Oct. 2005 was full of lots of ups and downs...but I really have to thank a lot of people for being with me to experience all of them – even if you didn't enjoy it! The determination and love of sport that we have continues to inspire me. Really special thanks to: Dave, Adam and Doug who did all of my rides with me. You guys had to put up with all my complaints – and uphill victories a la Richard Virenque! Dave, you also pushed me through my run workouts – thanks for letting me use your washroom even when I was all sweaty and gross. Chris, to be best domestique ever! You even got up extra early for those morning workouts! Tara, always there to listen and pass on advise, and to be an inspiration to me. Ellen – you always made me feel great, even on my worst days, and bought me pretty stuff too! Maureen, you did EVERYTHING else that had to be done (including dressing and bathing duties!), its beyond words what a great friend you are.

