

Kona Girl – 2008

In looking for a way to ‘mark’ this event a la Lance Armstrong (the comeback, for the team, etc etc), the moniker that has stuck with me is: ‘off one hand’ – I know, sounds strange and doesn’t really mean anything, unless you know my math skills. 2008 was my 6th Ironman Hawaii (so the count is ‘off one hand’), and it proved to be the Ironman that taught me the quintessential Kona lessons.

I always try to acknowledge how lucky I am to do this race and, in fact, it was noting this privilege that kept me away in 2007. During my 5th race in Kona I didn’t appreciate being there and so I decided that if I didn’t love being in Hawaii (not just the race, but the overall experience), then I didn’t get to go back the next year. Luckily for me Maureen was the ‘qualified athlete’ and I did get to go to Kona in 2007, but this time to cheer for her, do some training for IMFla., and revive my love for the Big Island. As the story goes, IMFla ‘07 was a huge success for me, and I qualified for Kona.

So... 2008 rolls around and the Kona Girl support crew is at capacity: my 86 yr. old Mom, my 85 yr. old Aunt, Glenn (aka Rooster – but I can’t get used to that nickname, suggestions pls!), and fabulous Dave all joined me in Hawaii. Close family friend from Dryden, Melissa and her husband Urs made the trip too (only partially to celebrate their 3rd anniversary!!). I was also very lucky to be racing alongside of three of the best athletes I know: ‘Supa-Star’ Tara Norton (accompanied by hubby Bruce and family), ‘Hard-Core Kim’ Nelson (with her ever supportive Mummy), and ‘The Prodigy’, aka Stuart Pass (with his wife CK and baby Matty). I also booked the 2005 KonaIM PB condo, planned the traditional pre-race pot-luck dinner, got the new Argon 18 E-112 tuned to perfection, and trained for the underpants run – all the essential elements for a perfect race were in place!! Oh, that and a year worth of superb training with Claudia at Body Pump, challenging workouts from Fiona of NRGPT, one IM, one half, one olympic distance and two half IM relays under my belt as part of the 2008 race season.

So, with all that preparation what Kona lessons did I learn??? That this race is frigg’in hard, taking a year off doesn’t necessarily help, you can’t take anything for granted or rest on your laurels – phew!

I am happy to say that I DID love every minute of my time in Kona (OK, maybe not the last 4miles of the run) and I did achieve my ‘secret’ goal (really, only 4 to 6 people knew about it) – to qualify for the Boston Marathon!! I didn’t hit the mark of a top-ten finish in my AG, but my placing was good given that I think that this year was the most competitive gathering of women in my AG that I had ever experienced.

Here’s how it played out:

Pre-Race Week – fun, fun and more fun

I’ve mentioned the pot-luck and the underpants run, these two events will now be the cornerstone of all coming races in Kona – here’s hoping. The pot-luck is something I’ve done every year to date and is a nice way to get to see everyone all at once – efficient socializing. The underpants run was new, and it was Fab-u-lous! I mean really, it’s not every day you get to see Thomas Hellriegel running around in his tightie-whities. Glenn ‘busted’ out the coconut bra and his

special IM Switzerland underwear, Stu dressed to embarrass his wife and 5month old baby, and I wore my “Chris Brook” designed top and matching undies...we were set to go!



Other highlights of the week included my Sunday training ride with Tara when we visited the painted church on the south end of the island - what a beautiful ride. Training with Stu on the road to Hawi and hanging out with Kim at the sports expo. I was also really pleased to do my pre-race warm-up ritual with Tara on Friday before the race. Tara is every inch a professional and I'm really honored that she wanted to do this with me.

All that was great, but when Glenn and Dave revealed their very special Kona Girl cheer-leading outfit, well....that was the cherry on-top of a perfect pre-race week.



RACE!

Swim – 1:08:34 (19th AG) – eeks...

My worst Kona swim ever! Problems with a slippery swim cap and a less than slippery neck line of my race suit (my fault, no body-glide), slowed me considerably. I finally gave-up stopping to pull my cap back on and endured the salt being ground into the gaping wounds on my neck. Oh, and my ankle injury from May started bugging mewhat the... I sure was happy to have that swim done. Even with all this I was still surprised that I was 2 minutes off my regular Kona swim time, so I made a mental note 'start working!'

Bike – 5:56:15 (14th AG) – eeks...

Shortly after seeing Dave near the airport – he was out doing his long run – I got a penalty, so this would have been within about the first 5 miles or so of the bike. This translated in a longer than a 4minute stand-down as there weren't enough stop watches for everyone that got nailed by the over-exuberant referee. My penalty, which I am convinced was timed by Spidey- Sense, put me in a less than stellar position off the bike. I did feel really good during the ride, noting this to myself in those spots where I've felt especially crappy in years past - basically the very beginning part, the middle uphill part and parts of the end! In retrospect, I wish that I had watched my watts more and my avg. speed less as I learned that constant pressure on the pedals is more important than consistent speed. I also think that I gave myself a few too many coasting breaks. No big stories from the bike...it was windy and hot, but I kept my head down and didn't talk to anyone.

Run – 3:44:58 (12th AG) – WOO HOO

Finally, things went from pear-shaped to perfect. Ok, not so perfect...

- my feet hurt the whole way - I forgot the good Dr. Scotty advice and didn't wear orthotics in my bike shoes so no support for my fallen metatarsal,
- I had wicked chafing around my waist - scars still evident 4wks later,
- found out that Tara had been taken out of the race when a volunteer ran in front of her while she was in 4th place on the bike - I could have screamed, and
- I swore, and then almost cried when Glenn told me I was on pace with only 4miles to go (sorry about that honey bun – I was really tired)

But other than that, things were great! I saw Stu killing the course (and beating me ☺), Kim running so strong it was scary, Dave getting the best tan ever and making friends ;) Melissa and Urs with their huge Canadian flag and Glenn ... who was every where over the race on his bike, proudly wearing his support crew t-shirt! Those things made it the perfect run; that and that I had my fastest IM marathon split ever and qualified for Boston.

Finish – 10:56:15 (12/57 AG)

Once again, the finish was a blur so I've had to watch the online video me crossing the finish line a couple of times to try to reconnect with how I felt – so nothing new there - what was new was that I didn't visit the medical tent. This was fortuitous as my Mom and Aunt were patiently waiting for me in the family reunification area. We managed to find ourselves a clear spot, and when Glenn arrived he helped me to sit down. Mom and Aunt Ruth proudly displayed their 'Go Linnea, Go-Go-Go' sign...I think it might have been the first time they had it out, as a very long nap kept them away from the course for most of the day.

After the obligatory photo shoot, Glenn, Dave and I went for ice cream, and then pasta – YUMMY! I was feeling pretty good, so we stayed up for a while but I was ready for a pretty long sleep after that.

Race Recap

Pretty much right away I was thinking that I didn't want to do Kona again. Besides the tough day, there were a few other things that made me question whether I wanted to put my money back in the pockets of the WTC again – 'nuf said there. Now, however, I have that feeling of unfinished business. I think I know more about where my shortcomings were and where I'd like to do better. This is the first time I've felt like this after racing in Kona, and maybe this desire to do better comes on more strongly when you have the support of your true friends and family, those who push themselves and you to always do your best, and those who know that the sky is the limit.

Post Race K-Swiss Sponsored Party

I'll let the photos below do the talking...once again, too much fun (of course, all my photos are on: www.linneahumphrey.com)



Thanks

I was very lucky again this year to have the sponsorship of **Claudia at Body Pump**. The weekly strength sessions were key to me getting through the season, and staying on my feet.

Dr. Scotty at Sports Performance Centres always made time for me, and didn't even flinch when he had to work on my smelly feet.

Argon 18 once again helped to get me on the bike that was best for me, and I look like Sam on it too!!!

Fiona and Nigel at NRGPT provided not only challenging workouts, but consistent feedback and race day support went above and beyond what was expected – thanks so much.

Zoot!! Wow, I finally have a race wardrobe that Maureen isn't embarrassed to see me in! Thanks so much Jenn for brining me into the 'highly fashionable and functional' race world!

And of course...the usual suspects...

Maureen, Chris, Dave, Joe, Ellen, Gerry, Tara, Bruce, Kim, Glenn, Rick, Sue, David, Adam, Jenn, Claudia, Stu, CK, Jackie, Larry....

You guys have all been part of this year, thanks so much for your continued support, kicks-in-the-butt, advice, humour, and providing just the right motivation...

