

IRONMAN BRAZIL, MAY 25TH 2008



After much agonizing over winter training for a spring Ironman (IM), way too many hours on the treadmill and bike training in D's basement, sweating it out at Body Pump, a FABoo training week in Palm Springs with D, a few cold weather outdoor rides with Kim and Jackie, and constant whining to my suffering friends (predominately Maureen and Ellen) and coach Fiona of NRGPT, departure day for IMBrazil finally arrived!!!

This IM came and went so quickly I feel like I've hardly had time to say 'OI' and 'CIAO'. The resonating emotion, however, is strong...WOW, this was the best IM experience I've ever had. From boarding the plane in Toronto (thanks for the first-class upgrade ticket D!) to standing in line for our return flight, I enjoyed every single moment. The credit for this goes to my friends who trained and raced with me – Hard Core Kim, Supa-Star Jackie, Killer Claudia and Fabulous Dave...a stellar line-up to say the least. Adding to this group in Brazil was Larry (Jackie's hubby) playing the role of IMSherpa for all of us...much appreciated... and Claudia's family of Olavo, Vinnie and Gabbi – the exceptional cheering squad. Thanks everyone!!!

There were many other factors that made this race unique and successful. Firstly, Claudia provided extra support by being our resident Brazil expert. A native of Sao Paulo (SP), Claudia was instrumental in the decision to race IMBrazil; she provided insider info and also helped to get our flights organized. Fiona gave the 'racer-perspective' as a two time finisher (and AG champion), and guided me through my new nutrition plan which was to be tested under race conditions. It was due in large part to the superb training that I had from both Claudia and Fiona that I was able to finish this race. Additionally, for the first time I used Ken Glah's travel company (EST) to arrange accommodation. This provided us with special perks such as a course tour, on-site massage and bike mechanics, shuttles to and from the race-suite, post-race hospitality house, and of course the amazing post-race authentic Brazilian dinner and party! We also met a number of amazing athletes from around the world (42 countries were represented at IMBrazil in 2008), namely Mark and Dana, and also Kyle all from Florida and Scott from Ohio. These folks were quickly assimilated into our Canadian crew (branded as trouble makers by Ken as demonstrated through our dinner-time antics), and added a lot to the overall race experience.

So... on May 20th after an easy overnight flight from Toronto and transfer in SP, we arrived in Florianopolis with bikes and bags and were greeted by the EST transportation

crew for the trip to our hotel. We had been told by other past IMBrazil participants (Gilles and Norm – thanks!) to pay attention to the trip from the airport as much of the way we would be on the bike course – hum...highway-side livestock (cows and horses), not a regular sight on a race course! I'm happy to say that all animals, living and dead, were removed by race day.

OK, fast forward to May 25th – race day. The first good sign was that my anticipated pre-race nerves (the ones where I hate everything) did not appear. Much of the credit for this goes to Kyle – our new BFF from Miami! He drew short-straw and had to sit beside me on the bus race morning. So instead of being concerned about my race I was enjoying some trash-talk with Kyle – and no nerves – NICE!

Body marking and race prep went by quickly and before I knew it were we making our way along the beach to the race start. We said 'good-luck' and 'good-bye' and Jackie and Claudia quickly disappeared in the crowd. Kim and Dave decided to work together on the swim and situated themselves to the left of where I decided to start – right behind Fernanda Kellar! I thought if anyone knew where the best position to start would be it was her.

The race got off to a vicious start. Remarkably the smaller field of participants did not translate into a less aggressiveness swim. Perhaps due to the large number of men compared to women - who knows. One thing was sure, it was a long and slow swim. The last leg of the M-shaped swim course went on forever (yes Elles, I did have the famous swim song going through my head), and it was during this portion of the swim that I noticed that the kayakers, usually on course for swimmer safety and support were also marshaling – yes, they were blowing whistles at people...interesting!



On finally exiting the water I saw the clock time of 1:12+++, um....WHAT?? Oh well, that's what you get for no outdoor swims prior to race day! I entered the change tent in tunnel vision focusing on my specialty – transitions – only to be met by Kim. "I've been disqualified!" she said....um...WHAT?? I didn't know how to react but true to her supportive nature Kim quickly added that I shouldn't worry about her and to have a great race. I think I mumbled something, but in reality I was in shock. Shock number two came when I got to my bike and saw Dave's bike still in the rack....um...WHAT?? Had he been disqualified too? The thought of my two friends not being part of the race put me in a slump, however the realization that there was nothing I could do to fix or change the situation put me back in the race.

I loved the bike course at Brazil (yes, it is possible to ride on the inside lane with traffic on the outside, grab bottles from aid-stations with your left hand and yell, 'On your left in Portuguese), and on race day we were lucky to have unseasonably great weather – about 23 degrees, sunny and light wind.

It wasn't long till "Mr. White-Lightening" went by me – pulling a group of about 10 guys – Go D Go!!! Phew, Ok, he's in the race. I guess D spent some time in T1 putting on the compression socks☺. Shortly after D went by so did a gal in my AG – the only woman to pass and stay ahead of me on the bike. OK. No sweat. Keep riding.



Putting my new race nutrition plan into action took a lot of concentration, but with the constant beeping of my watch all went according to schedule and before I knew it I was back in transition.

I had traded places on the bike with a co-competitor of Kim's - another Dana - who I had met prior to race day, and after my first port-o-pottie break of the run at 3k (where I saw Jack-Star coming in from the bike) I caught Dana and we ran together. We had just negotiated the two big hills (one really big, and one really really big – like 19% big) on the first loop of the run and had gone through an aid station when...oops... I went right over on my foot, ankle bone hitting the ground, and nearly fell. YIKES that frigg'n HURT! Dana yelled encouragement for me to walk it off and, luckily for me, a woman running behind us saw what had happened and gave me some ice that she had picked up at the aid station. I grabbed it and put it in my sock. I stopped at the next aid station to add some more ice, and continued running. I strongly believe that if I hadn't had the core strength through training with Claudia, and the running strength from Fiona, that I would have been on the ground! Only Aubrey knows where my tenacity to keep going comes from ☺.

I was surprised that I wasn't actually experiencing much pain and there seemed to be little change in my running form. An added confidence boost was that each time I stopped to get ice I was able to catch up with group that I'd previously been running with. I finally caught Dana again, ironically as we were both heading into a port-o-pottie, I 'finished' first and was away.

The shape of the run course (one 21km loop and two repeated 10km loops) gave me the chance to see the folks ahead of me and there was Kim! She had been able to get her shoes, and was now was making the most of her day by joining the marathon (she ended up running an estimated 50kms!), and close to Kim was Dave – he had that look of determination and focus! Go D Go. I didn't see Claudia or Jackie, but luckily Larry was there for me to hand my sweaty heart-rate monitor to as it was slowly carving a hole in my chest!

I was also able to check out that gal with the AG letter E on her calf (same as mine) – she was still ahead of me but I felt like I was making time on her but I didn't think it would be enough to catch her. That being said, I was feeling great, and was happy to be running at all!! Like the bike, the run went by so quickly and soon I was heading into the finishing shoot! It was a blur from then on...I crossed the line and was met by Dave, and then shortly after Kim, and then shortly after that by the nice guys in the medical uniforms and the stretcher!!! As soon as I stopped running my ankle pain went into overdrive and it was quickly swelling, so much so that it was difficult to get my shoe off!



After a nice IV with some anti-inflammatory added in for special measure, and the fitting of a corrugated walking “cast” Dave, Kim and I made out way to the food tent where we were met by Jackie – it was a great reunion. It was then on to the EST hospitality house for some food while we waited for Claudia and family after her second successful IM.

Once back to the hotel we checked the results. I was sure I had finished second but there, when we sorted the results by AG, it showed me as the first place finisher. With ankle raised, compressed and iced I spent a nice night believing I had clinched my first IM AG win! Well, as the saying goes, it was nice while it lasted and the next morning it was clear that the gal with E on her calf was actually 40; her age had been incorrectly recorded in the race results and the overall results showed that she had beaten me by a 3minute margin.

IMBrazil was a huge success despite missing the win. I had a great time, the test of the new nutrition plan was a success, I got a tan, met some boys and burned some calories – all key markers! IMBrazil was also my lucky number 13 IM finish, my sixth 2nd place AG finish, and bumped up my number of top-ten AG finish placing to 10!!

Again, my friends and family were the other key components to this IM success, along with the support of my coach Fiona, with appreciated input from Nigel, sponsors and supporters including Claudia at Body Pump Inc., Zoot, and Argon 18.

To be honest, I can't really imagine racing anywhere other than Brazil again. But...with the luxury of having the summer to contemplate the 2009 race season (gosh, its only June), I know that my focus must now be on achieving my goals at IMHawaii in October... and with the support of having my Mom and Aunt there with me, along with Kim and Tara (and hopefully some other qualifiers yet to come), and maybe even my own IM assistant (HINT, HINT Dave), it is already a success.



Thanks again, and check out the photos link for all the great shots from Brazil (http://www.linneahumphrey.com/imbrazil_08/index.htm)