



I everyone! Well, it seems surreal to say it, but Ironman number 10 is now complete!!!

The day in Coeur d'Alene proved to me that there is still a lot to be experienced, and learned, in ironman racing and that this is likely to happen at every competition, no matter how much preparation and planning goes into the day.

It was great to have my training partner Kim Nelson back to racing after her three year hiatus after competing at IMHawaii with me in '03. Kim proved she is still 'hard-core', and with three kids at home, she was on a mission to have her best race ever. Also racing with us were Norm Flemington (now relocated to beautiful BC), and Dave Ahrens – with whom a war of words had been unfolding since we both registered for IMCd'A. A last minute addition to our 'racing team' was IM pro, Tara Norton. After narrowly missing an IMH qualify spot at IM Lanzarote (with a fabulous finishing place of 4<sup>th</sup>!), Tara put IMCd'A on her schedule – LUCKY US! Rick and Sue Cadman finished off the Toronto group – and with the cheering squad of Bruce Greenwood, Jan Flemington, Bob Chew and Gold Medal Olympian, Lori-Ann Muenzer, we were set to race.

My preparation for IMCd'A included many valuable additional training partners, friends and sponsors that I have to thank. Maureen Brook, who's on-going task has been to listen to me complain and provide a kick on the butt when needed. Maureen's hubbie, Chris – Domestique Extraordinaire – was always available to ride with me and carry my water while I ran. Ellen Maitland – my 'girlie-girl' who always made sure that I didn't go outside without being properly accessorized! And Christian Camden, who's SUPER coaching ([www.cadenceentrainment.com](http://www.cadenceentrainment.com)) and support has been indispensable.

I'm also really happy to have support from Pearl Izumi, Amino Vital, Mental Coach, Argon 18, HED Wheels, and La Bicicletta.

### **Preamble**

A few years back, four friends of mine competed in IM Cd'A – two of them have since moved back to Norway, one has moved to Miami, and the other one works so hard that I never see or hear from him – so I was almost in the dark with respect to good insider information leading into the race. I knew from Tara that it was a technical and rolling bike course so Christian had incorporated lots of hill repeats into my workouts. My training had been good and consistent in the months leading up to the race, and with my result in St. Croix, which had qualified me for IM Hawaii, I felt confident and unpressured.

Traveling to Cd'A deserves a report of its own – but I'll save that for another time. Dave and I flew to Seattle (other passengers chose to sit closer to screaming babies than to us...), and then rented a SUV for the drive to Idaho. The SUV was so HUGE we joked about how this race needed to be renamed Coeur d'Luxury – race day proved to us how wrong this statement was.

We had rented a house on the bike course, situated on the Spokane River, it was beautiful, and a great place to stay, complete with hot tub! The days leading up to the race were filled with the regular early mornings, light training, course recon., waiting in lines, and relaxing. The night before the race we had the whole gang out to our house for dinner. This was one dinner party for 11 people that end at 7:30!

### **Race Course**

The race site is located in downtown Coeur d'Alene with the transition area in a park directly across a bike path from the swim exit. Dave and I spent some time walking the transition and figuring out the best way to navigate our way to our bikes – we thought it might be possible to completely cut out the trip to/past the change tents, and go directly to the bikes, however this didn't end up being the case.

We also drove the bike course and were amazed at how many different types of riding would be required. By this I mean that the variety of road surface and geography would mean using all your riding skills; from long gradual climbs, to shorter-rolling hills, to technical descents and manoeuvring through city streets, riding along a bike path, and even taking a spin around a greyhound race track. Oh yes, and riding on a makeshift platform – parallel with railway ties! Hummm...fast bike?? – I don't think so. The benefit to all the different conditions, and the fact that the course was two loops, was that the bike would pass quickly.

The run course followed in the tread marks of the bike, going through town, and then out along the lake – providing a very similar feeling to the run along Skaha at IMCanada. After a turn around point half way up a hill, the run retraces its steps through town and past the transition area, for a shorter section out-and-back along the lake. Again, the run course was two loops. I was glad that the run went through town, as the forecast for race day was ranging from mid-to-high 90s, and I was hoping that folks would be out with their sprinklers on for us!

### **Race Day**

Race morning went remarkable smoothly; usually there is one or two glitches that can catch you off guard, but this morning all ran smoothly, well, except that Dave forgot his food for the bike. Luckily he had a few extra bars with him and this was enough!!

After a quick move through body marking, it was over to transition to drop off my special needs bags & transition bags, and then a last check of the bike. Task numbers one, two, three and four of the morning done.

## Swim

1:03:43 – 8<sup>th</sup> Age Group



My coach will be please that I had time for my pre-race swim warm-up. As I turned around to come back into shore I was amazed at how big a group of 2,200 competitors can look. Dave happened to be right beside me – we both took a collective deep breath!!! Back on the beach I decided to stay behind Dave as he had a good strategy in place and I was going to try to follow it in order to avoid the biggest crowds. The race announcer asked for first time athletes to put their hands up. A girl directly in front of me did – she was in the first line of those to enter the water!!....'Good Luck', I thought.

The first loop of the swim was not bad, with lots of open water around me, except at the two turn around points where it got congested (the race was a large open ended rectangle – with an exit onto the beach for the entry into the water for the second loop).

Unfortunately, the group that I was with going into the second loop took their time through the exit to check their watches, adjust their goggles and stretch – this was VERY frustrating.

The second loops proved to be more 'interesting' as I began to feel very small beside a group of what looked to me to be very large men. And then it happened – a strong kick to my chest, and I was seeing black spots. Luckily, I was near a kayak and after a short rest stop I felt like I could move on again.

The rest of the swim was uneventful and I made it safely back to shore and through transition quite quickly.



### **Bike**

**5:44:36 - 3<sup>rd</sup> Age Group**

On exiting T1 I heard my name and saw Bruce – funny, I thought, he’s supposed to be at the hotel watching soccer!

The ride along Lake Coeur d’Alene was great – the air was a perfect temperature and the riding was easy. The first aid station was a blast – staffed by a high school cheerleading team – they were even louder than me!!



After the first turn around it was back through town, out of town, and to the first climb of the day – the long gradual one. At the top of the climb I caught up with Kim. She was looking great and we re-passed each other two times before I took the lead and kept it. I was really enjoying myself and was riding well.

The second challenging climb – the steeper shorter one - was still easy in the morning cool temps, and I reminded myself that the next time around would be more challenging so kept my riding conservative.

Nearing the second turn around section of the bike I saw Dave. We were able to yell hello before he turned left and on to the bike path. I was pretty surprised to see him, and it gave me a good indication that I was riding well.

The second loop of the bike got off to a slow start as I had to stop and turn around at the special needs – I'd been handed the wrong bag, well, more correctly, the bag had my number on it but it wasn't my stuff. There were two bags with race #2282 – the first handed to me had the number written on in marker – a last minute addition?? - instead of the race sticker that we are all supplied. After getting that settled it was off again.

I was still feeling really good even as the temperatures rose, and began passing folks that had perhaps gone out too fast on the first loop. But, as they say, all good things come to an end and mine ended with about 30 left on the bike. I noticed that my toes were really hot – almost a burning sensation - and that my feet were feeling pretty numb overall. I loosened my shoe straps and wiggled my toes and tried to move my feet around for the rest of the ride. It was no good; my feet were a mess.

## **Run**

### **4:10:43 - 2<sup>nd</sup> Age Group**

On entering T2 I had some difficulty running off the bike. I focused on getting through the transition as quickly as possible and luckily the volunteer who helped me was great and I was off and hobbling!!

The start of the run course takes you along the lake for a 1.5 mile out and back section. Before I reached the turn around marker I saw Dave again. He wasn't smiling, so I yelled out our code word to make each other laugh, which got a little wave – 'not good' I thought. I had my own troubles though, the burning and numbness in my feet was still there. I really had to talk my way through this part of the run, and then when I caught Dave around the 5k marker, and he was walking, it was very tempting to join him.

A few sightings of friends (Kim's Mom, Dad and her Aunt) as well as Lori-Ann and Jan (even if they're looking the opposite way), helped to keep my spirits up.

I'd experienced the same problem with my feet at IM Wisconsin so I talked myself into continuing to run remembering that in '04 I'd gotten through it, and I would do so again. It took the entire first loop for the pain in my feet to lessen to a point where I thought I might be able to put some effort into my running. One I tried to pick up the pace however, I found that I had severe pain in my chest and that my back was in spasm. I started a breathing pattern where I took two small breaths in, and then one longer exhale, and found that this worked fairly well.

After walking much of miles 16-20, I was able to run a more consistently. I saw Kim at mile 23 and we both said we were dying. She told me not to give up. I believe this is what gave me the inspiration to carry on. As I mentioned before, there is a section of the run that goes through the city, and as I'd hoped, everyone was out with their lawn sprinklers and were doing a marvellous job at keeping us cool.

## **Finish**

### **11:05:24 – 2<sup>nd</sup> Age Group**

The run down the finish stretch was one of relief and pain. My chest was really hurting, and while I wanted to pick up the pace to have a nice run to the tape, it just wasn't going to happen. I felt a temporary lightness in my pace, and then I crossed the line into the arms of the volunteers.



“I’m having trouble breathing” was the first thing I said. I was ‘gingerly’ escorted to the medical tent. I needed a massage, as it was so painful to breath. When I tried to lye down on the massage table my back really went into shock. The massage therapist called over a chiropractor, who quickly diagnosed 4 displaced ribs.

A painful treatment, followed by a more painful massage, then Kim joined me in the massage tent. We shared our stories and then went to get changed.

I called Maureen right away and that’s when the tears started, I couldn’t believe how much pain I was in. She already had the results from the web and told me the astonishing news that I’d placed 2<sup>nd</sup> and that Kim had finished 8<sup>th</sup> in her AG!!! That made the tears go away – momentarily at least.

## **Post Race**

After an evening of 'icing' my rib cage with a container of ice cream, and some sobering sharing of stories among all my friends who'd raced, I came to believe that this was perhaps one of my more successful ironman races. I'd faced some adverse conditions, and had been able to work through them. I was mentally strong enough to see the alternatives that I had, and to take them instead of giving in to pain.

Next up for me is the Half Ironman in Parry Sound, where I hope to qualify for the Long-Course World Championship – 2007.

Cheers

Linnea