



“Are these girls fast or WHAT???!?”

- Mike Riley, announcing the top 3, 40-44 AG women at IMFL Awards Banquet

It seems unbelievable that IMFLA 2007 was my 12th ‘step on the beach, foot on the peddle and sock in the running shoe’ Ironman. But it was, and it was fantastic!!

The race was unique in so many ways it’s hard to know what to write about. Here are a number of FIRST.....:

- o IM will a full year of training with Claudia Bolognesi of Body Pump Inc. – I met Claudia at the Y just prior to her first IM in 2006. She helped me to get ready for Kona that year, and we have been working together ever since
- o IM with coach Fiona Gray – I’ve known Fiona and Nigel for a number of years, and when I approached them last February to see if NRGPT would take me on I knew from the ‘get-go’ that this was going to be a great match
- o IM with my new Argon Gallium – while I’ve had it since last November, this was its first big race – same bike as Sam McGlone, so that’s all good!
- o IM with a pre-race training camp in Hawaii!! – Maureen, thanks for being the “qualified athlete” and letting me steal your hubby Chris to be my training partner for the week...thanks Chris for the domestique duties once again, and the StarBuck stops on the Queen K!
- o IM forgetting all my bottles and my extra contacts at the condo - a little too relaxed race morning??!!
- o IM with my own dedicated support team – it really does make a HUGE difference to have two people to cook your food, massage your feet, make your bed, carry your bags, watch the final season highlights of ‘Will and Grace’ for the 98th time, and scream their heads off **all day long** – Dave and Claudia – THANK YOU!!!



This race was also unique in that I raced it in memory of my Dad and Claudia’s Mom, both of who passed from cancer – ironically my Father being diagnosed just shortly after the last time I raced IMFlorida in 2000. This race was also dedicated to Dave’s Dad who at the time of the race was in his own battle with cancer and has since, sadly, passed away.

Race Morning

As I mentioned, I was really relaxed on race morning. I'm not sure if this led to the two little pre-race mess-ups, but it sure was nice to be able to eat my full breakfast without feeling like I wanted to punch out the next person who talked to me. My pre-race nerves manifest in a pretty strange way and I'm happy that no one, including me, had to deal with that.

After watching 'Will and Grace' - the favourite dance highlights, just one more time - we made our way to the race site where I immediately saw my friends Kat and Kevin from MTL. After dropping off the special needs and basically getting everything in order (including sending Dave back to the condo to get my bottles out of the fridge), we took the mandatory pre-race silly photos. I tried to make my way to the water for my warm up - this was nearly impossible as all athletes were corralled into one small area for beach access. Note to everyone doing this race - go to the far right side of the line up of people - there is another entrance to the beach there!



The Swim

I did manage to get into the water just as Mike Riely was yelling - 'Everyone Back To The Beach' - whatever...I needed to get a few mins in the water...what I remembered then was that I hadn't gone over the timing mat, so once again...it was a bit of a panic to find where the mat was, run over it and then back into the water - at least that brought up my HR!

Strange I thought, watching the pros start the swim, that the majority of them were swimming with the buoys on the right and not left - given that it is a counter clock wise swim direction. Apparently the markers on the way out and back are just for sighting, with the only requirement for the swim being that all swimmers go around the corner buoys and swim diagonally from the beach (on the second loop) towards the large floating Ford sign. I think this contributed to the extra huge pile-ups at each corner with athletes converging from all sides. I got pretty squished between two guys and was literally squeezed up out of the water and above their shoulders - this made it easy for me to get my hands on their backs and push them both away from me 😊

I was happy to see that my first loop of the swim was around the 30mins, which I thought would bring me in close to the 1hr mark, but with the beach run between loops and I guess a bit of fatigue, I came in at 1:04 - which is just below what I usually expect at an IM...here I am coming out of the water - at the back in the blue cap.



T1 and Bike

With only a few minutes lost trying to find my T1 bag (the volunteers and I were equally out to lunch), I got through T1 with the fastest split in my AG (hey, you gotta be the best at something!) and I was off onto the bike. I had dutifully set my PowerTap on Avg. Watts and was desperately trying to follow the guideline that Fiona had given me – um...well I was a little over, mark that up to years of riding on 'how I feel' as opposed to looking at a bike computer.

The first half hr. of the ride was really pleasant – just chugging along and having a great time. A Swedish athlete actually commented, as he rode past me, that his daughter had the same name as me – OK, so I'm making friends! I'm not sure when it happened but all of a sudden I was totally engulfed by men. Now, normally this wouldn't be a problem, but these guys were riding 'cookoo'. Before long there was a crash right beside me – this happened just after the 'crashee' had ridden up beside me (even though I was passing someone) to announce that his bladder was full and could I let him in to pee – I'm not kidding. As he was talking he was drifting and as he was drifting left a guy behind him rode up to pass (so now we are 4 across), so the drifting and the passing came to no good end and they crashed. The next 'almost crash' (again, me passing someone, someone passing me, and another trying to pass him...where did they learn to ride??) had me riding scared – I just kept saying to myself "ride ahead, ride ahead, ride ahead".

After the 'special needs' zone – where I had to stop as there was only one guy looking after the 'women's' section (all the bags were grouped by race number), guess they didn't expect us to be there so early??? – the huge groups of guys thinned out. The wind picked up a bit along here too, and I dropped by watts to try to ride the rest of the course more within the 'race-plan' target. Bike time: 5:11



T2 and Run

OK – well if I thought I was fast in T1, WOW, I totally smoked T2 – the fastest transition in my AG by almost a minute– so T1 and T2 1st place honours! As I ran to the change tent I did see that there was one bike on my AG rack – one with a Norwegian flag painted on the disc wheel....I secretly hoped that the heat would get to her....

The rest of the run was “OUCH, OUCH, OUCH”....the foot problems that have plagued me at a few IMs returned. I kept my new running mantra - based on the advise that Adam had given me – playing through my head ‘light and fast, light and fast’ and when that got annoying, I started counting – much more inspiring – HA! Luckily, the first loop actually went by pretty well...Dave and Claudia were EVERYWHERE – I saw them three times within a very short period of time – I’m not sure if they were tracking me, or stalking guys!



Dave and Claudia also delivered on the pre-race plan of shouting certain ‘uplifting’ quotes, yes; you guessed it, ‘Will and Grace’. I’m sure the other runners got a smile (or were totally concerned), as Dave yell “Bull Whip, Dream Whip, Celine Dion” and Claudia yelled Um...something – unfortunately, I was on the planet of pain and didn’t even know that she was beside me. So while I’d like to be able to recount how great my run was, I really don’t remember too much of it. Counting, drinking coke and taking salt tabs pretty much occupied my mind... until that final stretch to the finish line.....Run: 3:47



AAANNNNDDDDDDDD.....We're DONE!!!



These two photos pretty much sum up my feelings about this race.

- Finish Line – run across with Dave
- Time – 10:08 – 2nd AG Place
- Perform a figure skating lift – how much more Canadian can you get?! ☺

At the start of this report I gave a quote from Mike Riley which highlighted that the top-three women in my AG broke the course record! Pretty cool. Even cooler was the Norwegian gal who kicked all of our butts, finishing in 9:41 – this was her first IM back after an 11 year break! Wowzers.

I was really worried coming out of T2 that I would not be able to run at all. Well, I did my regular run split after a bike ride that was faster than...well, faster than I'd planned to go, and with two broken feet I was really pleased with my run split (actually the run was little bit faster than my previous best, so a PB, but not the best run I know I can do!).



From PCB and Beyond.....

I started out by saying this race was unique. I came to IMFLA with one main goal – enjoy the race 100% of the time. A lofty goal, but I think I pretty much achieved it...with only minimal pouting on the run...

This race helped me to clarify my strengths, weaknesses and opportunities for improvement. Fiona had my goals and 2008 racing plan the day after I got back. I know that next season will be full of fun, hard work, and a lot of success, not just for me...but the entire crew that make being in this support so rewarding...you all know who your are.

I have my Kona certificate hanging on my wall, waiting for the registration date. My Mom and Aunt Ruth are the confirmed Kona Support Crew 2008 (oh, they will be 86 and 87 respectively next year), and now I'm just waiting for the successes of all my friends to join me for my 6th trip to the Big Island

....hopefully some of them will know how to play Bridge!!!



Check out the rest of the IMFLA and other new race photos on my web site: www.linneahumphrey.com