



### THREE BLONDES AND A BRAZILIAN

Well, here we go again, another race season starting off with the St. Croix Half Ironman. As much as I've said that 2007 is the year "to do what Kim tells me to do" this race was also about pushing myself, and having a fun time with great friends.

Luckily those great friends included some of the most talented athletes I know. These gals are part of the group that continues to inspire and push me to the best person and athlete I can be.

Returning to race since last being in St. Croix in 2001, was Hard Core Kim (Nelson), accompanied by her cheering team of four! Joining us for the first time was Claudia Bolognesi – fitness trainer extraordinaire and great friend and athlete. Rounding out the group was Supa Star Tara (Norton), ready to put her pre-IM Lanzarote fitness to the test.



After the mess that I encountered in 2006 with my bike not arriving in St. Croix at the same time as me, and then trying unsuccessfully to fit my ‘bike-condo on wheels’ in to the compact car that Tara had (although it was fun hitching a ride into town in the back of a jeep with the bike box hanging out the back – thanks to the boys from NC!!!), it was a great help to be picked up at the airport by a new friend from last year, island resident Scott Fricks. I met Scott and his wife Judi through Tara, and getting the royal treatment was much appreciated.

After arriving and registering at the condo we were just about to head to our unit when from behind someone yelled – “Hey Linnea” – I assumed it was Michelle, owner of tritheworld.com (outstanding travel/accommo service for triathletes), but no...it was my friends from Cochran Alberta – Carolyn and Jamie (Fartman) Roth and their kids Becky and Jonathan. I know the Roth’s from numerous trips to IMC and also IMHawaii. As it turns out Becky and Jonathan are as talented (or more) than their Dad, and we got to watch them rip-up the 5k run race on Thursday night – remember these names, they are both super athletes.

The regular lead-up to race day ensured, pre-race workouts, pre-race meeting, pre-race dinner, pre-race Jump Up party, and being bitten by every bug possible on the island – here’s Claudia and I hanging out with the most unhappy person in St. Croix.



Like last year, race morning was overcast, but no rain. Having to wait till the VERY LAST FRIGGING WAVE START – one of the great perks of being 40+ - meant that there was a huge group of slower swimmers to make my way though. While passing people makes you believe that you are swimming really fast, it may only be by seconds.....I exited the swim in 33:28 – 4<sup>th</sup> in my AG and a mere 30seconds faster than last year when I was also 4th! Yes, consistency is my middle name.

I immediately felt fantastic on my bike – as I made my way through the first mini-loop of the course I remembered what a struggle the little “sh\*t-kicker” hills were last year, but this time they were no problem. My new Argon 18 Gallium I think has proved to be an improved fit for me, and this combined with my new ‘super aero’ position courtesy of Coaches Fiona and Nigel of NRGPT, and the wheel sponsorship from Gerry Lashley – thanks for the super fast Zips – I really enjoyed the whole ride! I’m also convinced that the 8 months of consistent training with Claudia at Body Pump has made me a much stronger and more aggressive athlete overall. Maybe next year I’ll remember to put the 27 cassette on – so pretty!

‘The Beast’ was still challenging, but I took some motivation and a lesson in humility from seeing the (leg) amputee athlete working his way up the climb. The slight breeze and lack of powerful sun made the way up the hill; dare I say it...enjoyable? This picture is not on the beast, but gives a nice view of the beauty of this course.



Bike time: 3:02:28 – 3<sup>rd</sup> in my AG. While 5mins. slower than last year, not bad considering it was only my 4<sup>th</sup> time on the road (so what are all those girls in Cali doing all winter while we are inside sweating it out in the DFF – not riding I guess!).

I was looking forward to the run - ready to test my marathon-trained fitness. I’d had some good run test results and training with Coach Fiona, and I was anxious to see how far I’d improved. As I came into town to T2 I saw Tara already well into the run course. Also out of transition was Kim. She’d had a solid ride and I knew that her demonstrated marathon domination this year was going to make her a strong runner.

The first loop of the run was HOT – the clouds had disappeared and the sun was out in full force. I’d lost my hat during T1 (don’t ask) and apparently the sun really got to my head as I decided that it would be a good idea to put my gel flask down my top. Not too smart – easy access, yes, but also major chaffing. Luckily my usually unruly hair was held perfectly in place by the great products I got through the ‘Stay-Put’ racing team!

During the second loop I was making ground as I passed a couple of girls in my AG. I couldn't be sure if they were on the first or second loop so I tried to make the pass as definite as I could, even though I was starting to swear on the inside – yes, inside and not out-loud!

The route to the finish line in St. Croix is one of the best – a long road with a slight downgrade – you can see those within striking distance ahead of you. I kept asking spectators if they could see any girls behind me, “Nope Nope Nope” – hummmm, a good sign? As I crested the hill I could see Kim crossing the finish line. This added an extra spring to my step, and I made the final push to cross the line. Run time – 1:49:28 vs. 2006 result of 1:48.02. My finish time of 5:24 was good enough for 2<sup>nd</sup> in my AG –AGAIN....four races in St. Croix – four 2<sup>nd</sup> place finishes....



The best footnote to this story is the finishes of my friends, the other two blondes and the Brazilian. Tara had a strong 7<sup>th</sup> place finish in the Pro division, putting the final touch on her race form for Lanzarote – Go T Go! It was a huge thrill to hear Kim's name at the finish and the announcement that she'd won her AG AND the CEO challenge – OVERALL!!!. Claudia placed 2<sup>nd</sup> Female OVERALL in the sprint division – only 8weeks post knee surgery....

I've got the best sponsors– they are:

- Claudia at Body Pump
- Fiona and Nigel of NRGPT
- StayPut Race Team
- Argon 18
- D'Ornellas Fitness Factory

And, the best training partners and support team: Dave, Maureen, Chris, Ellen, Gerry, Adam, Erin and my sister Kath, who is the best at scoping out the competition, big bro Gord – loudest cheer leader and my Mom – who is just simply wonderful!!!