

Family, friends, and supporters,

I hope this message finds all of you healthy and happy. I'm delighted to write my first race report following my personal best full Ironman finish last weekend at the inaugural Ironman Louisville. Race reports are valuable tools to keep those interested in my racing career informed as well as opportunities for me to reflect back on the race in detail. I've attached several photographs from the race to this report. In other recent news, a race photo of me from Buffalo Springs Ironman 70.3 in June was featured on the August cover of *Runner Triathlete News* (also attached). Also, for those of you in the Austin area, *Austin Runner* magazine's September issue will feature both an article about me and a cover photograph.

This fifth place overall finish in Louisville was my highest to date against an international professional field. This has been my rookie season racing professionally in the sport of triathlon. I turned professional in January and began training full-time after years of moving up through the amateur ranks. This year has been filled with both successes and learning. Ironman Louisville, a truly amazing experience, has helped me to shift my perspective to consider myself a top five contender in future professional races. Being able to share this success with my parents, who were in attendance, made it all the more special. The pre-race good luck wishes and congratulatory messages afterwards from many of you reaffirmed how lucky I am to have such a supportive network and special people in my life. Next stop, top three!!!

As with all Ironman triathlons this race began with a 2.4 mile swim, followed by a 112 mile bike, and finished with a 26.2 mile full marathon. This was my eighth full Ironman to date, but only my second as a professional. Each Ironman is a learning experience and a test of ones training, preparation, and spirit. My total time for the day was 8:59, with time splits of 59 minutes for the swim, 4:49 for the bike, and 3:03 for the run. As with all full Ironmans the day was not flawless; however, this experience reaffirmed the fact that this race rewards those who are patient, trust in their training, and keep a cool head throughout the day.

The day began with my standard pre-race routine: 3:20 am wake-up, followed by firing up the ol' waffle iron and coffee maker in the hotel room. My parents always laugh about waking up to the smell of waffles in a hotel room. I absolutely gorged myself with waffles, to the point where I was a little worried that I had over eaten and felt like my walk to the race site was more of a waddle. I knew I had three hours to digest and my body would need every calorie of energy in coming day. By race start, I was feeling spry and ready to roll.

The new Ironman in Louisville was a very fun, and as always, challenging course. The swim, held in the Ohio River, was modified by the race directors due to unusually strong currents following the tremendous rain in the Midwest. Race morning, all 2000 competitors walked $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile upstream from transition to the alternate swim start. From there, we were to swim about $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile further upstream before turning around and swimming with the current back to transition. The narrow channel where we began was wide enough for the forty or so people in the professional wave, but the amateur field started in a time trial fashion five minutes behind us for safety reasons.

Following the gun, after the obligatory few minutes of swimming melee, thrashing, and jockeying for position, I found myself in a decent pace line in about 4th position. I saw a separate pack gapping us on the right, but this was normal for a swim start. The group I joined was a little faster than me, so I thought it was a good place to try to hold my position. Swimming into a head current made it important to catch as much of a draft off the others as possible. After about ten minutes, a few small tactical errors resulted in me losing contact with the swimmers in front of me. I was then to swim the next 49 minutes completely alone. The 86 degree water was very warm, so I felt it was difficult to push hard without overheating. I hit the turnaround and looked at my watch under the water: 33 minutes, shoot! I was only 1/3 of the distance and well over half of my goal time. "Relax, it's a long day," I told myself. Following the turn-around I could feel the advantage of the tail current. I covered the next 1.5 miles in 26 minutes; a bit of a difference.

I exited the water, a bit frustrated with my swimming, as I'd spent considerable time over the last 8 months working on this leg. I decided not to let it bother me. I remember thinking to myself as I was running through transition, "you are a professional and have to think like one. It's a long day so let's stay cool, stick with our plan, and be patient." As I exited transition to start the bike, I saw my parents, always a highlight for me. I knew I had lost considerable time on the lead pack, but I consciously kept feeding myself positive thoughts, trying to create my own reality. As I passed by my mom, she yelled that I was in 25th position.

"Okay," I thought "not bad, that's about right. Now that I'm on the bike...it's business time!!"

The bike course was very pretty as it wound through Kentucky's horse country, but also deceptively hilly. There weren't any really large climbs; however, after a short flat stretch exiting town, it was continuously rolling. This was nice because the technicalities of the ride occupied my mind. The rolling terrain created a challenge because the constant ascending and descending did not allow for extended periods to get into a consistent rhythm. I think all of the continuous climbing caught up with many of the competitors in the later stages of the bike and on the run (the 91 degree temperature didn't help many on the run as well).

My intent was to ride controlled until mile 70, but I quickly found we had a head wind for the first 45 miles, which required some degree of extra effort. I was riding a bit aggressively but still felt very much in control. One by one, I started reeling in the pro field ahead of me, mentally counting them off as I went. By mile 45, I had pushed into 14th place. I was happy that I was able to manage a few issues that had popped up on the bike. I had one water bottle cage rattle loose, threatening to come off and swing down into my gears. I changed my hydration strategy so I didn't need an extra water bottle, relying more on the aid stations. On one hill, my rear tire felt soft, a telltale sign of a slow leak leading to a flat. Rather than wonder about it for the next ten miles, I opted to quickly stop my bike and feel the tire, happily discovering it was full and that the "squishy" feeling was a combination of the road surface and my head playing tricks in

the middle of a race. At another point, I missed a hand up at an aid station, normally not an issue, but because I lacked a spare water bottle due to the loose cage I was dangerously low on water. Rather than worry too much for the next ten miles to the subsequent aid station, I made a couple adjustments to compensate and went on. I was very pleased with how I didn't let a couple small items bother me to the point where they affected me mentally. I felt very much in control of my thoughts and emotions for the entire day.

We finally got a tail wind after 45 miles, so I used the next 25 miles to tick out a reasonable tempo well within myself, anticipating the coming push. We starting our second bike loop and began to roll through the amateur field who were on their first loop. I used that time to focus on riding safely as the road got very crowded and dangerous. I found myself dodging through several close calls as people failed to hold their lines or swung left as I passed. A little nerve wracking, but it's all part of the race.

At mile 75, I felt very strong so I decided it was time to light-it-up. This is the point in every Ironman where those who pushed too hard too early begin to crumble. There's common wisdom in Ironman racing that the true race doesn't really begin until mile 80 of the bike. From mile 85 through the finish, we had a solid tail wind (making up for the first 2 hours of biking into the wind). With the favorable wind and fresh legs, I really pushed hard. Aside from the normal Ironman "bike seat" pains everything else felt good. I came into transition ready to go. I had moved up thirteen positions in the pro field and made up considerable time on the pack ahead. As I biked in, I could see some of the lead runners, not all that far into the run. I remember thinking "all right, it's ON!"

Exiting the transition on to the run course in 12th place, I heard the announcer on the loudspeaker start talking me up to the crowd and it got me psyched up. I started thinking "okay, where's my first victim." Less than a quarter mile out, I passed Alex Taubert of Germany, a multi-time top 10 finisher in Hawaii. Looking up the road I could see more. Through mile one, I looked down at my watch "6:01, whoa, too fast. Relax and stay in control, I've got 25 more of these bad boys I have to run." Before mile two I had dropped another guy and had moved up on Petr Vabrousek's shoulder. This was a special moment for me. I've watched Petr's career for the last several years. He is a well known pro from the Czech Republic and always a top 5 finisher and now here I was running stride for stride with him. I passed my parents. I heard my mom yell:

"You're in 9th. 7th is two minutes up and he looks horrible."

My dad yelled:

"You're a predator, hunt them down!"

My pace through those miles was a more reasonable 6:30-something. Petr slowly drifted back. My stomach was a little full but manageable. I had downed as many calories on the bike as I could stomach in order to begin the run with as little depletion as possible. The full feeling subsided by mile 4. From then on it was a matter of cramming

as much water, Gatorade, gels, coke, and electrolyte pills as I could in my body. By mile 6, I had moved into 6th place and could see 5th place up the road with an escort cyclist. As we rounded the turn-around, I got a good look at him. He was still running strong, but I could see those tell-tale little signs that he was beginning to suffer. On the run turns, when you get to see your competitors, no matter how much you're hurting, you try to look cool, relaxed, and strong (sometimes a very difficult act). You don't want to give anyone the impression that they can catch you.

By mile 11, I moved up beside Ivan Albano from Brazil. As I crept past him, I felt him move in on my shoulder to try to go with me. I thought "I don't want this guy to sit on me for the next 15 miles, let's see how much he has left." I gave a surge, a mini-sprint in the middle of the race. At the same time I cut across to the other side of the lane. If he wanted to go with me, not only would he have to accelerate, but he'd have to change direction too. It was enough for me to get separation and he slowly drifted back.

Now with the "5th place" escort bicycle, I thought I could move up on 4th place. As mile 14 ticked by, the fatigue of the day slowly set in. The mid-6 minute pace started to drift to a low 7 minute pace. When the Ironman fatigue creeps in, it's all you can do to keep your tempo and your spirits up. As mile 16 passed, the pain really set in. For the next ten miles I was in the most intense pain of my life, but I did not want to give up a top five finish. I was encouraged because it appeared that all the other male pros were decelerating at around the same rate. Hans Muehlbauer from Germany was hovering about 3 minutes behind me, but was not dropping back, so easing up wasn't an option; having to dig deep despite my body screaming to stop (incidentally, this feeling occurs in every Ironman). For the last 15 miles, to take my head out of the game, I counted to 20 over and over with my strides. It's an effective mind trick, almost self-hypnosis to occupy your head so you don't drift to the negative and depressive thoughts that take hold late in the race when your body's natural defenses try to get you to stop.

I remember one person on the other side of the road yell to me some encouragement around mile 22. He saw the pain I was in and he yelled:

"Don't wake up tomorrow morning and WISH you had done it today."

It stuck with me and I truly internalized that thought, repeating it over and over to myself. I also kept thinking back to what my friend Desiree told me before the race:

"Remember when it hurts and you want to quit, that there is no other place in the world that you'd rather be now than racing right here. You can always push your body to another level!"

I also remember thinking:

"This is why you train so hard and make all those sacrifices in your life! It's right here, this step, right now, it only matters now. Tomorrow it doesn't mean anything, so let's do it NOW!"

Those thoughts cycled through my head to take me through the last 10 miles. Coming through the finisher's chute in any Ironman is always special, but this time it

meant something more. It meant that I've made the right decisions in my life, I've done the right things, and I belong mixing it up in the international level of professional racing. After few tears of joy while hugging my parents at the finish I remember thinking: "I'm here."

I want to thank all of you who have supported me in each of your own way. I would especially like to thank Little Caesars, as I am excited to announce our new partnership. My Hot-N-Ready Pizza and Little Caesars uniform logos drew a lot of positive attention and comments from spectators and participants alike in Louisville.

The support I have received from others like the crew at Jack and Adams Bicycles, my running coach Gilbert Tuhabonye, and my buddies who make me suffer on the bike every weekend have been very important for my development over the last several years. I know with their help and also working in conjunction with Derick Williamson at Source Endurance I will continue to grow as an athlete and person. After a solid recovery, I'm excited to build on these gains and prepare for the Longhorn Half-Iron Triathlon in October and then Ironman Florida in November.

Thank you for all of your support. Remember that winning is about the journey, not the destination.

Patrick

If you do not wish to receive updates on my racing career in the future, please respond to me and I will take you off my distribution.