

Nov. 2, 2004

Paradise revisited

Qualifying to compete in the Triathlon World Championships in Kialua-Kona, Hawaii is a dream come true, at least for most endurance junkies. This is my third time to compete on the island, and it never gets any easier.

After living and training in San Antonio, TX for 12 years, moving to Las Vegas, NV this past summer was quite a culture shock. I quickly found the athletic niche in 'sin city' in pursuit of preparation for Hawaii. Three weeks before the race, I was cycling in Mammoth, CA., on a one hundred mile ride. The night before the ride, the local bike shop predicted winds to be blowing at thirty miles per hour. We were more concerned about staying warm, then the dangers of the wind. Just like Hawaii, the winds were blowing us sideways. Around mile 25 I ascended Dead Man's Summit, I saw a rainbow, and the next thing I know, my bike is being pushed out from under me. I somehow got off the bike, and was sliding on the ground heading for the side of the cliff. Thank goodness my bike didn't go off the cliff! I looked down at my ankle, and there was a large slicing cut that no doubt needed stitches. I coast to the bottom of the hill, and waited for the SAG (support and gear) van to pick me up. He arrives, and drives me to the hospital. I get nine stitches, leave the hospital in the SAG wagon, and re-start the ride at second rest stop (mile 33). I finished the 100 miles, but I knew that I would not be running the next day, as I had planned.

Two days later, I make a trip to San Antonio to take care of business and train with friends. With the support and help from my long time friends, I was given confidence that this little mishap will not deter my Ironman competition.

My husband and I arrived in Hawaii one week before the race. The cut on my ankle had recently closed, but I was still icing the swelling that lingered. My gait (running form) wasn't right, but Russ, my husband (6 time Hawaii Ironman finisher) reassured me that I will be fine.

Come race day, he was right. There are always tough moments to overcome, the lava fields, the wind, and our mental capacity to carry ourselves through to the end. But there isn't ever an end, only the finish line, which is the stepping stone to the next finish line. Ironman is an addiction. At mile 24 of the run, I said to myself, "I will never come back here again." Three days later, I'm looking for the next race to bring me back. Third place is good two times around, but is it good enough?

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