

Dear Friends,

Thank you for your encouragement and support. When I decided to train for a triathlon, I thought I was crazy. Some of you thought I was crazy too. But after many weeks of training, I am done.

Here is how it went:

WOW. The race was great. I had fun, I finished and I surprised myself. My goals were to have fun, finish the race, not get disqualified and not finish dead last. I succeeded on all counts.

We woke up at 6 AM. Checked the weather since rain was a possibility. It was 65F and 100% humidity. Warmer than we thought. Margaret, Karen & I biked from our hotel to the start of the race (less than a mile). We began by getting our race chips (a little device that records your times). Then we went to body marking, where they write your race number on your arms & legs in permanent magic marker. They also put your age on the back of your calf. (Thank goodness it isn't your weight!)

My start time in the pool was an hour after the fastest starters. There were several athletes who finished the race before I ever got into the pool. I should have seeded myself higher in the swim rankings, but, oh well. I just swam at my pace, tried (not too successfully) not to get bashed on the head by other swimmers. I passed 2 people in the swim and finished the 300M (Not yards – which are shorter!) in 7:48.

I had not practiced any transitions prior to the race. With that in mind I did well. I had my area in T1 set up relatively well. I quickly dried off, stomped my dirty, wet bare feet in baby powder, put on my socks, running shoes (I don't have bike shoes), shirt, helmet, bike gloves & sun glasses. My bike rack was a longer distance from the bike entrance/exit. I exchanged words of encouragement with my rack mates and I was off. I did T1 in 2:24. I was happy with that.

The bike mount was on a small uphill area. (DUH!) I got on and began pedaling. I immediately passed to riders and felt really good. Then, all these really fast riders with really high start numbers BLEW by me. I just wished them well and continued to pedal at what I hope was a nice steady pace. The bike course was basically flat. Just a few low grade slopes (I can't even call them hills) both up & down. The bike course was BEAUTIFUL. The course was almost entirely shade covered. There were many turns (only 2 or 3 were tight) around this picturesque lake. Still waters with low hanging moss covered trees. Palm trees were interspersed throughout. The azaleas were in full bloom on the lake side and on all the houses along the route. I did take the time to enjoy the scenery all while pedaling along. Most of the roads for the bike portion were NOT smooth asphalt. They were this gravel imbedded road that after several miles, left me vibrating in my seat and hands. There were police officers and volunteers at every turn along the race. Many cheered us on and shouted out words of encouragement. I said thanks (tried to smile) and pedaled on. A portion of the bike ride was along the running route. I shouted words of encouragement to the runners as I pedaled past them. (It was nice to be going faster than they were.) I made a point to drink an entire bottle of Gatorade during the bike, so I would be hydrated for the run. I attempted to eat a few jelly beans, but mostly dropped them and found chewing unpleasant. Over the course of the 11.5 miles I was passed MANY times, but I also passed a few. I finished the bike leg in 43.29, much faster than I have ever ridden for that amount of time before. I was feeling good!

Transition 2 was easy. There was nothing to do but take off my bike gear, strap on my race number and head out. I contemplated sitting down, eating my banana and resting a bit, but I quickly let that go. I did T2 in 1:08

Did I mention I hate running! 20 yards into the run, I remembered that! (So much for feeling good.) My legs felt like rubber with my feet being bricks (now I know where the term brick comes from). I didn't feel particularly effective, but I promised myself I would run for 5 minutes before taking a walking break. I didn't make it that long. I walked for a minute and then began jogging again. I can't say I ran the race, I mostly wogged: a combination of walking and jogging. We were not allowed any head phones or music for the run. This was very difficult for me, as I typically use music to drown out my labored breathing and distract me from how hard I am working. I played many head games with myself during the run portion. I will run to the third tree on the right, then I can walk. I will run to the foot of the bridge, then I will walk across and start running at the end of the bridge. I kept this up for most of the race. I also spoke many affirmations out loud reminding me that I can do this. "Okay Michelle, you are a triathlete, you are a triathlete, you are a triathlete. I am strong, I can do this." You get the picture. (My fellow competitors must have thought I was nuts!) At every water station, I took a cup of water and mostly spilled it on myself while trying to get a few sips of water. I so loved seeing the mile markers along the race. At the turn around (the half way point) I glanced at my

watch. I was well ahead of the 45 minute pace I was hoping for. I was walking more and running less, but I was now encouraged. However for some reason the mile and a half back, was much longer than the mile and a half out. I don't get it! During the last half mile I saw my friends Karen's daughter Kelly cheering me on. I began running towards her. Shortly after I realized I had run outside the cone and needed to back track and get "on the course", so I did. The race volunteers laughed, cheered me on and I teased them that I really needed to be legal if I was going to win this race. Danielle and Leo were in sight. Danielle promised to run alongside me and sing for the whole race, but now she finally showed up to do her job. She sang Queen's 'We are the Champions' in her best out of tune voice. I loved it. Margaret, my friend who talked me into this, and had already finished the race, joined in the singing. The crowd loved it! I crossed over the small foot bridge and ran with what I left towards the finish line. I heard them announce my name as I came in.

I was done. I am a triathlete! When I finally looked at my watch, it was under 1:40. Much faster than the 2:14 I had planned for, or the 2:00 I had hoped for.

We hung around cheering on those to finish after me. Then Leo pulled out the champagne (warm) and we popped the corked and celebrated. It was only 11 AM (but we figured if the beer truck was serving, why not!) We went inside had pancakes and sausages (you need protein right?), and waited for the post race festivities.

After doing door prizes they began with the top finishers in each age group starting with the oldest. SHOCK of SHOCKS! They called my name as the third place finisher in the women's 46-50 age group with a time of 1:33:06. I was floored. Karen & Margaret cheered loudly, until they called Margaret's name as the 2nd place finisher with a time of 1:28:49. We all screamed. What a fabulous surprise to top off a great day. I ended up finishing 61st in a field of 85 women. Far from dead last! I was happy.

Thank you for believing in me. Your support was essential.

Love,

Michelle

Triathlon

DELTA



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