

Ironman World Championship

Kailua-Kona, Hawaii

2.4 mile swim, 112 mile bike, 26.2 mile run

October 10, 2009

Reported by Brad Seng, *Team Sport Beans/NTTC*

If you were tracking things online during the race you know how freaking hot & humid it was on race day. Throughout race week, the mercury seemed to be inching up a bit. This is to be expected on the Big Island, but, man, was it toasty. I was grateful for the opportunity to race in my fourth Ironman World Championship and was looking for a better day, but simply could not deliver. Prior to the race I had the privilege of speaking at the IronPrayer service. During my message, I shared an acronym which has been with me in my prep for this race and would carry me through the day - FAITH - Fueling, Awareness, Intent, Trust, Humility. My race encompassed each of these with some serious humble pie ☺

Swim (58:56) - My best swim here to date. The start line was filled with the typical jostling, and I found myself right next to my buddy Michael Lovato. We both got a good chuckle out of the surf pulling the entire field forward while the surfboarders tried to maintain a firm line. Bang - the cannon sounded, and I think I heard Michael say, "oh crap" before he shot away from me. I had a pretty clean start and swam most of the 2.4 miles with a small group of six to eight athletes.

Bike (5:16) - Shortly out of transition I hit a large bump going through an intersection which launched two bottles off my rear cages. I was not about to embark on this ride without these bottles so eased off to the side, waited for athletes to clear, turn around and got my dang bottles. Michael's wife, Amanda, was standing at this intersection and gave me some encouraging words as I got myself back in the game. I was able to bridge up and pass a few of the athletes with whom I exited the water and rode the first 20-25 miles with Petr Vabrousek (Czech Republic) and a couple of other guys. We had a marshall keeping a good eye on us so it was a clean affair. Petr eventually rode away from me, very much like the last three Ironman events we've been racing together. My focus was on fueling and keeping cool along the exposure of the Queen K and leading up to Hawi. I felt the best I have riding this course and reached the turn-around in Hawi faster than in previous years. I was feeling good and on track for a decent ride. Back on the Queen K and around 95 miles into the ride both legs began to cramp in my vmo muscles. Oh God, not now I thought. It became more difficult to maintain a steady pace as the winds picked up and athletes whom I passed earlier were now returning the favor. I really tried to stay positive, but was very concerned how my legs would respond on the run.

Run (3:00) - I typically have felt very smooth, fluid and fast over the first 10 miles along Alii Drive. Not so much on this day. I found myself in a very uncomfortable place. I think the devil was trying to make some deals with me as my mind had thoughts of, "Now would be a good place to take a break." I struggled to keep moving forward and eventually started to feel a bit better as the run unfolded. Once again though, someone dropped a piano on my back as my pace slowed to what seemed like a crawl. I was in survival mode taking in as many fluids and cooling myself with ice & water through each aid station. Around the 12-mile mark I caught up with my buddy Michael who was walking and obviously having a tough go on this day. He gave me some encouraging words to keep running. At this point I guess it's all relative...running, Ironman shuffling, walking, whatever to keep moving forward! Shortly after this I caught Stephen Bayliss and we also exchanged some words of encouragement. He re-caught me approaching the turn-around in the Energy Lab. We ran together for a bit, and he eventually gapped me as we exited the lab. Back on the Queen K I was greeted with more words of encouragement from Amanda, Kelly Liljeblad and a few others. Thanks guys as you gave me a good chuckle and inspiration to keep moving forward! My *Team Sport Beans/NTTC* teammate, Jessica Jacobs, was heading towards the Natural Energy Lab and looked very strong. She was able to give me some positive energy, and I soon ran up on my teammate Ben Hoffman who was making his Kona debut on a damn tough day. We, too, exchanged words of encouragement. Hmm, seems like I was having lots of little conversations out there on the course. Over the final five miles I actually started feeling pretty decent all things considered. I was gaining ground on Stephen in hopes of running him down. Approaching the final small incline to Palani Road I could tell I would not catch Stephen, but Petr Vabrousek was now in range. This guy is one of the most

consistent Ironman athletes with numerous top five finishes. He has beaten me up pretty well in my last three Ironman races and I was determined to catch him. As Stephen passed him I could tell he was looking behind to see if anyone else was present. Shortly after making the turn on Palani I made my move and passed Petr doing so with a pat on his shoulder as a sign of my respect for him. The crowds along Alii were fantastic as they greeted me with a thunderous welcome to the finish!

9:21, 6th American & 47th pro male.

A huge congrats to Chrissie & Craig for their performances.

Mahalo to the thousands of volunteers...they are world class! At one point on the run, I missed some cola and a volunteer ran after me to hand me a cup. ☺

Many thanks to my sponsors for their continued support and, of course, my family & friends. Your emails, prayers and words of encouragement carried me to the line on an extremely tough day. A special thanks to my homestay, Joanne, during my first week on the big island - you rock!

(Photos below by www.asipho.com.)

