

Ironman Cozumel 2010 Race Report

For those that don't know my history, I started running 3 years ago when I got divorced as a way to burn off steam. It was wonderful, and I got in shape as a result. I had only been running for about 6 weeks when a friend convinced me to sign up for the Chicago Marathon, which I completed.

The slippery slope began and the next thing I knew I was buying a bike and starting triathlon. This was in 2008. I couldn't swim one length of the pool, but signed up for Master's swimming classes and worked my way up to my first sprint triathlon in June of 2008. I raced in multiple events that year, eventually racing in a half iron distance race in North Carolina, which I completed in just over 6 hours (thanks to a lightning fast swim).

Fast forward to fall of 2009 and after a year of not doing much of anything race wise, I get suckered by my tri buddies into signing up for the full meal deal.. Ironman Cozumel 2010. I had no idea what I was getting myself into.

Training

For those that don't know, the distances in an Ironman are as follows: 2.6 mile swim, 112 mile bike, and 26.2 mile run. The bike and run didn't really scare me, it was the swim. The real kicker was that in Cozumel, wetsuits are not allowed due to the temperature of the water. I'm a shitty swimmer, and the wetsuit provides buoyancy that gives me a security blanket. I was shitting bricks to say the least. I live in Northern Ontario, so that means I can swim in the open water from May-Sept, but the other months of the year, I have to travel 1 hour to the nearest swimming pool. I did this all winter twice a week, and when summer came, swam 2-3 times in the open water, sans wetsuit. My confidence was better as I eventually knocked off a 3.2km swim in the open water without my wetsuit. I was still worried, but everyone kept telling me that salt water has tons of buoyancy and I'll have no problem.

April 2010 - Quickly the training started ramping up. I was starting to get 8-10 hours of training in a week, taking Tues. off. I loosely followed a plan, but made sure to get my long rides and runs in on the weekends. Did about 5 rides of 150km, and various runs with the longest being 30km. I worked on my nutrition plan, and did lots of brick workouts (bike ride, followed directly by a run). I was peaking at about 14 hours a week, and due to my busy schedule with life, kids, Masters course work.. really struggled to keep the training up. I made it to the end of the summer, and once the weather started to get worse in October my training really died off. If I was to do anything differently it would be to try to maintain my training in the last 6-8 weeks.

Race Day

The day before we had all of our bikes checked in at the transition zone, and dropped off our swim/bike and bike/run bags. The special needs bags we would bring with us the morning of the race.

Actually had a good night sleep and the alarm went off at 3am had a pretty big breakfast of oatmeal, bagels and peanut butter and tons of coffee. This was difficult at that hour, not to mention my nerves were jumping! We nervously checked our bags, and made sure we had everything we needed. We hopped in a cab and headed over to the race site at 5:30. The bike transition was open for one hour prior to the 7am start time to allow us to get everything ready.

I changed, and applied generous amounts of vaseline so as to minimize the effects of chafing/friction and the salt water.

Swim

We started hearing the announcers call us to the start line... all 2300 of us! The pros were starting at 7am, and the rest of us age groupers at 7:20. We all huddled around nervously on the dock and watched as they had dolphins jumping during the Mexican National Anthem. I was pumped, and nervous.. and wondered what the hell I was doing. The pros were off, and it was time for the other 2250 of us to jump in the water. This was chaos, and not helping my nerves. It was an in water start, and people were panicking looking for something to hold onto. I knew my plan from the start, and that was to get to the back the side. I knew as long as I could get some open water, and get into my rhythm I would be fine. I didn't want to be fighting the whole 2.6 miles, as I would be exhausted. Once I found some open water, I waited and the gun went off. I watched as the throngs of people before me started swimming. It was probably 2 or 3 minutes until I started swimming, but I had lots of room. The swimming was gorgeous, with 100% visibility you could see everything on the bottom, all the marine wildlife, scuba divers, etc. The water was fairly calm with a bit of a roll, nothing crazy. I had a hard time sighting the buoys, and did a lot of zig zagging. There were changing currents as well, sometimes we would be swimming with the current, and sometimes it felt like I was swimming on a treadmill. I probably did more like 3 miles in the end. After talking to people, many echoed those comments. The swim seemed like it would never end, and I started to get worried if I would make the swim cutoff (2h20m). I finally rounded the final buoy and swam the last 800m to the dock where I was helped out of the water. I looked up at the clock as I ran into Transition 1, and saw 1h43min. It was at that point I knew I was going to be an Ironman.

Bike

I made my way into the changing tent, and took my time. I had 17 hours and wasn't going to be in any rush. I did a full change into my cycling gear, and ran out to find my trusty steed waiting for me. I forgot to put sunscreen on, something I wouldn't realize until later. Didn't look like there were many bikes left in transition, but I'm used to that

and just remembered my goal.. to finish. I ran my bike through T1, and hopped on past the mounting line. I settled in for what was going to be a VERY long bike ride. The course was 3 loops of 60km, and wound around the south end of the island. The initial part of the bike was uneventful, and I was starting to get passed by pros already. My whole race plan centered around a conservative bike. I knew I needed to feel reasonably good coming off the bike, or the run would be a disaster. The course was flat, and it was easy to get going too fast. The course ran around to the south part of the island which was absolutely gorgeous. Riding along the shore and remote beaches with nobody to be found, with the sea crashing up against the rocks. This beauty came at a price though, and that was a vicious headwind. It was difficult to get over 20km/hr through this section, and it lasted for about 20km. I kept reminding myself not to work too hard on the bike, and leave as much as possible for the run. My nutrition on the bike consisted of 1 Gel + 1 Salt Tablet every 30min. washed down with as much water as I needed, and 1 serving of e-load per hour. This was working great, until I dropped my salt dispenser somewhere at the end of my first lap. When I ran into Marty later, he said he saw it lying on the ground... oops. I was a bit worried, as the temperature was definitely starting to creep up. I checked out my gels, and they had some sodium in them, as did the e-load. I was hoping I would run into one of my teammates and borrow a few tablets. Thankfully I saw Marty on the second lap and he was able to give me a few. Rookie mistake was not having some salt tabs in my special needs bag. I did pack a peanut butter and honey sandwich in my special needs, and it was so good! I continued on the bike and was feeling good, but consciously taking it quite slow. Rumor has it, it got up to 34 degrees Celsius on the bike, which isn't surprising as it was HOT. The crowds in town were amazing, and definitely made it easier to keep going. I pulled into T2 feeling pretty good. I handed my trusty steed off to one of the kind volunteers (not knowing if I'd see it again), and went into the changing tent to get my running gear on.. trying not to think about the 42km I was about to suffer through.

Run

Once again did a complete change, and lubed up. I decided to forgo my fuel belt and "live off the land" taking only what was on the course, supplemented with my salt tablets. I started out on the run course, and it started right in the town. The crowds were 5 deep, and cheering like mad. Shortly after starting out, I could see Peter and a few of the other Nachos coming in off their first loop. My race plan was to walk every aid station, which was a bit different than the 9min run/1min. walk I had trained for. The aid stations were really close at 1km apart, so I decided to just walk each one. This worked really well for the first loop and I couldn't believe how great I felt. I kept telling myself "I shouldn't feel this good", which was okay.. because soon enough I wouldn't feel good at all. I came in off the first 14km loop in about 1h40min. I was on pace for a sub 5hour marathon which was just fine in my books. Then the whole day changed, and the wheels fell off. About 1km into the second loop I started to feel my stomach knotting up. Every time I ran, I felt like I was going to throw up. I slowed down and walked, but it wasn't getting better. Finally my body rebelled and I ran to the side and starting throwing up.. my body has had enough gels and was getting back at me. Once I had successfully purged myself, I started to keep moving, and every time I tried running I felt like I was going to repeat

these events. It never got better, and I couldn't eat or drink anything else and couldn't muster up anything more than a brisk walk at that point. It was then, that everything started to hurt. I've never felt such pain in my feet and legs, but I just kept putting one foot in front of the other. I finished my second lap in considerably longer time, and couldn't believe I was going to walk another 14km!!! I did some quick calculations, and figured I would still finish even if I walked the rest of the way. Obviously not how I wanted my race to go, but I managed to plug away. I couldn't get over the people that were still out on the run course in the dark cheering us lonely people on. Without them, I'm not convinced I would have finished. I finally came to the 1km sign, and was heading back into town. I could see the giant video screen ahead, and could hear the music pumping. I could hear the announcer calling out names of people finishing. I got totally pumped and started jogging. If anything, I was going to run in my finish. I came into the finishing corral and the people were going crazy... this was for me, the average Joe! I sprinted across the finish line, and couldn't hear him call my name.. but I knew at that point I was an IRONMAN!

Marty, Dave, Tom and Wendy were there to catch me, and I could barely walk. They led me through the medals/photos, etc. I felt really awful as I hadn't had anything to eat or drink for almost 4 hours. I sipped on some coke, and couldn't imagine eating anything. We collected our stuff and walked across the road to the finish line. Peter was sleeping, and Tim was looking terrible lying on the couch. We sat around, I tried to drink a beer but couldn't stomach it, so I just passed out in my bed. I had a surprisingly good night sleep.

Post Race

The next day I was sore, but most of all felt like I had the flu. I couldn't stop shivering, and didn't know what to do with myself. I tried to hydrate, and had some pasta and a nice long nap. It's really amazing how much you abuse your body in a race like this. I guess the difference between someone like me being out there for 16 hours, and the other guys who are out there for 10, are my body could only take so much liquid nutrition when it finally had enough.

The rest of the trip was spent relaxing, and spending time on the beach and drinking tons of beer. I managed to rally and was able to spend a night partying with the rest of the Ironmen at the post-race party at Senor Frogs. Within 3 days, I felt pretty good which was surprising.

It really was an amazing experience. Firstly thank you to my wife Kerry and my daughters Nicola and Anna. They put up with my early mornings, and weekends of training. Kerry called herself the triathlon widow at one point.

Thanks to Dave for being a great mentor and motivator. Thanks to Marty for listening to me blabber on about nothing on those long 6 hour bike rides. I feel like I had the potential to do so much better, but I'm not going to dwell on that. I had problems, and dealt with them as best as I could, and my body would let me.

Would I do another one? Not anytime soon, but I have a feeling this is only the beginning.

Thanks for reading.

Results

Time: 16:09:12

Catagory Male 35-39

296th in my Catagory

Swim: 1:43:05

T1: 10:36

Bike: 7:50:55

T2: Didn't take

Run: 6:24:36

