

RACE REPORT – IRONMAN USA LAKE PLACID, JULY 23, 2006

Lake Placid, NY is a gorgeous venue for the Ironman (or any other outdoor event for that matter). The atmosphere in the days leading up to the race was intense. Athletes everywhere (and I think I was the only male with unshaved legs!). The Ironman is a unique experience. This year, Heather and I were blessed to have some additional fans at the race: My mom and dad, my sister, Joy, and her husband, Chad. First time IronFans! It was so great to have them at the race! Race Day Conditions: Cool (great!), Rainy (not so great). Fortunately, the rains subsided a couple hours in, making for great conditions for the day. Temperatures were in the 70's. Nice.



The Swim: 2.4 miles.

The race started at 7:00 a.m. It is a mass swim start, meaning all 2200 athletes enter the water at the same time. It was a deepwater start, so we were treading water for 10 minutes prior to the actual start. The swim consisted of two rectangular laps around buoys in Mirror Lake, a gorgeous crystal-clear lake. It was the roughest swim start I've had in a triathlon, as far as physical contact from other swimmers. My swim goal: 1:15. Actual time: 1:11. My fastest Ironman swim split yet. I was pumped!

The Bike: 112 miles.

The bike is still the most grueling part of the race for me. And this bike course is particularly difficult, as it's the hilliest Ironman bike course in North America. I set a somewhat aggressive goal for the 112-mile bike course: Break 6 hours. That would mean I would have to average 18.7 mph on this hilly course. In Ironman Arizona earlier in the year, I averaged 19.5 mph, but that course was pretty flat. This would be a test. It rained hard for the first 20 miles or so, making the downhill stretch by mile 9 rather intense, as I was rolling over 45 mph down much of that section. I finished the first lap in 2:55, averaging 19.2 mph – right on schedule. The second lap can make or break the race, though. I managed a 3:04 18.2 mph 2nd lap, for a total split of 5:59:45, 18.7 mph! I met my goal. However, I would later find out that my nutrition strategies on the bike would come back to haunt me on the run. In Arizona earlier this year, I drank too many fluids on the bike, causing my stomach to shut down and stop digesting. I tried to skimp on both fluids and calories on this race, consuming just 100 calories per hour, rather than the recommended 300 – 400. The big question would be whether or not 600 calories is enough to sustain me for the marathon.



The Run: 26.2 miles.

Coming off the bike, I felt fantastic. I just had my best Ironman swim, followed by a respectable sub-6 hour bike. I knew that if I could crank out a 3:30 marathon, I'd be in under 11 hours, exceeding my 12-hour goal by an hour! As I ran out of the transition, I saw my family and gave them a big, double fist-pump. I was ready to roll, and felt great. I started clicking off 7-minute miles. I knew that was a bit fast, but I felt so good, I wanted to let it roll. I continued the pace for the first 10 miles or so, when I started to slow. I finished the first 13.1 mile loop in 1:46, close to 3:30 pace for the marathon. It was still within reach. Well, by mile 15, the thoughts of finishing in under 11 hours were fading fast, as I found myself slowly running down. But my sub-12 hour goal was still an easy reality, or so I thought. By mile 17, I hit that infamous "wall". For those of you who have never hit the wall, I don't recommend it. I found out the hard way that 600 calories is enough to sustain me for 17 miles of running in an Ironman. Unfortunately, the marathon is 26.2.



By Mile 17, I was literally stumbling along the shoulder. I had trouble even *walking* in a straight line. It started to become a reality that I may not even finish this race, much less break 12 hours! I tried to force myself forward, but my body wasn't cooperating. As much as the food at the aid stations turned my stomach, I forced myself to grab some Coca-Cola at each mile marker. After 5 miles of stumbling, the sugars started to kick in, and I regained some strength. At mile 22, I realized that if I could run sub-8 minute miles for the final 4, I would finish in under 12 hours. I crossed the finish line strong – in 11:57:17. Praise God for allowing me to reach my sub-12 hour goal! To Him be the Glory!!! And thank YOU for your prayers!!

