

Oceanside 70.3 Race Report
Aka The Race I swore I would never do
March 29, 2014



Me with Coach Martha and her special event glasses

This is my 3rd year with TLV and my first race report. Why? Simply put I was too lazy to write one. However I decided I would write this one because I greatly benefited from reading other race reports such as the one Colleen Wilcox wrote for this event last year and I have thoroughly enjoyed reading every race report that has come out. Yes I am one of those people that read everything that is sent out.

Why the heck did I do this race?

For two years I have heard about this race from Martha and others. Always so motivating to hear the talk about the ice-cold ocean swim, numbness in the extremities, the cold windy weather, the high ocean swells. Oh and you get to train in the winter, probably by yourself. Wow where do I sign up! And yet here I am. I think this is the mental illness that slowly creeps into your life the longer you participate in TLV or triathlon in general. So I signed up for this race after listening to Martha talk about the experience she recommends before taking on an Ironman event. Her recommendation, as I recall, included participating in at least three 70.3 events and one of them should be an Ironman branded event. In November of 2013 I had signed up for IMAZ 2014 and my experience up to that point had only been two 70.3 events called Barb's race. When I went to watch the TLV gals race in IMAZ in 2013 the intensity and energy of the event struck me as being so much different than being at Barb's that it was a bit unnerving so I thought I should get more race experience under my belt before IMAZ 2014. And guess what...an Ironman 70.3 just happened to be 30 minutes from my house.

Pre-Race analysis

I have mastered the art of tapering. In fact I am so good at tapering that it alarms me. On Monday before the event I did my morning swim with Swim Velocity and did pretty much nothing for the next 4 days. Oh the only thing I did do was obsess over what Coach Linda calls "taper pains". These are aches and pains that seem to be quite real but seem to disappear

on race day. I have experienced this phenomenon several times. In addition to the “taper pains” I was also very nervous prior to this event. I attribute most of that to training for this event pretty much by myself as opposed to training with 30-40 of my TLV training buddies. What helped with the nerves was the day before the race I attended the Challenged Athletes Foundation (CAF) luncheon. I got my spot at Oceanside through a charity slot supporting CAF so I attended the luncheon the day before that honors the athletes that will be participating in the race event even though they are all missing various limbs. Needless to say, that after hearing their stories and the adversity that they have had to overcome in their lives, made my concerns quite trivial. I had a major attitude adjustment at that point and acknowledged the privilege that I had simply to be able to participate in this event. Plus when one of my co-workers made the mistake of asking me about this race and I went on as to how nervous I was etc, she then said to me “you do this for fun, right? Oh yeah. I forgot.

Race day

This event has two transition areas and you are allowed to put your running gear at T2 the night before or the morning of. I asked Coach Martha what she did in prior years and chose to follow her lead which was to show up early on race day (5am), park my car near T2, drop off my running shoes, sit in the car until 5:45 eating the rest of my breakfast and then ride my bike to T1 with my swim gear in the bag provided by the race organizers. T1 closes at 6:30 am so I got there on my bike by 6am. There seemed to be plenty of parking at T2 and since T2 is at the finish line it is very nice to be so close to your car when you are done. By the way, as you make your way down to T1 you are joined by hundreds of your fellow racers that are going the same way.

I was fortunate to have perfect race weather! Upper 50's at the start of the race, water was approximately 60 degrees and the day ended sunny at 70 degrees. Beautiful. I must say this was my first race in which I did not have 10 to 40 TLV ladies to talk with in transition. Just when I was thinking how much I missed the TLV ladies I look over and see the TLV Blue! Colleen Wilcox and Master Sherpa John Wilcox, Donna Gelnett and Mari Wei. I saw them before they saw me and I got a little teary eyed. Okay so I am a big baby. I was not really expecting any TLV ladies there since there were several big race events going on that day and watching a 70.3 event is a really, really long day. Actually it seems longer than if you have actually done the race.

Swim (estimate 44 min/actual 49 min)

So swimming is not my event and I really hate swimming in the ocean. However to train for this event I did 4 ocean swims at Corona Del Mar. Yeck. Martha made me do this but apparently she seems to know what she is talking about because the morning of the race I had no apprehensions about getting in the water. Luckily several TLV people swam with me at Corona Del Mar. I have no idea why they choose to do that but they claim to enjoy the process. Go figure. A huge shout out to Jill Citron and my swim buddy from Swim Velocity Nevenka Gubor as they swam with me every single time even when I know it was not convenient for them. A great help to combat the cold water was a thermal swim cap and swim booties. That made a huge difference and I really never had any issues with the cold water.

Okay back to race day. Before you enter the water you spend several minutes in a chute waiting in your swim wave. As my swim wave got closer I was next to the transition area where the pros were coming in. I thought I would watch them to see if I could learn anything. No sooner did I start watching the pros when I saw a women pro run out of T1 with her bike only to return seconds later to T1 because she forgot her race bib and they will not let you proceed without your bib. Apparently this pro has not taken Coach Martha's triathlon basics class which teaches you to put your bib over your helmet and race shoes so that you don't forget your bib. Awkward. A minute or so later my wave entered the water via a boat ramp and we had about 50 or so meters to swim to the start. That is your warm-up. You sit there for about 1 minute and then the gun goes off. To avoid the roughness of the swim I purposely took the far outside line however that tactic cost me time. As I finished the swim and looked at the time I was surprised to see the time of 49 minutes. The swim did not seem anymore miserable than all my other open water swims and yet this was my slowest time ever. I was really disappointed. That disappointment got lower when I ran the ¼ mile transition only to find my bike being the only one hanging there out of about 3 transition racks. Let me see if I can give you another example. Have you ever walked out of work late at night or out of the shopping mall late to a parking lot and saw that your car was the only one left in the parking lot? It was like a beacon of light was shining down on my bike saying-here I am waiting for you. Yes there was also a very polite Marine volunteer also standing next to my bike waiting to help me. I believe for the other participants the Marine volunteers would help you find your bike. In this instance I needed no help. Now looking back, I realized that part of the issue was that I was not racked with my age group but rather I was racked with the other CAF fundraisers so people of all ages (i.e. younger and faster) were racked with me hence the reason my bike was blowing in the wind on the transition rack all by itself. That is the story I am going with at this point and the story I tell my family. Work with me.

What I learned:

- 1) Next time take I will take as straight as line as possible in the swim. I saw later on my Garmin that I swam 1.32 miles vs 1.2 miles. Hey I am not Colleen Wilcox (i.e. 31 minutes for a 1.2 mile swim) and cannot afford one extra foot of swimming. I will endure the body blows of the swim just to trim a few minutes off my time.
- 2) Swim booties and the matching thermal cap are hugely unattractive but hugely effective in keeping you warm. Okay not as cold.

Bike (estimate 3:20 16.8 mph/actual 3:23 16.4 mph)

I had read that the bike route of this race was the biggest challenge and I would agree. For training I would do 2 loops of Santiago Canyon numerous times and that equates to approximately 3100 feet of climbing in 50 miles. Barb's race has about 1700 feet of climbing and I averaged about 17 mph during that race in 2013. But I backed my estimate down for the bike because this was early in the season I had not been riding that much.

The first 28 miles is a breeze and as instructed by Coach Martha I took it easy and focused on a cadence between 90 and 100. Then as I approached mile 28 I looked up and saw the first hill. It looked like ants going up a hill and was a bit ominous. For .5 miles the grade is between 10 and 14% and I would estimate approximately 25% of the people get off their bikes and walk. But I got through that area fine and I know coming up will be several other stretches of 8 to 10% grades with another section having people get off their bikes and walk

but not as many as the first section. The hills last until mile 41 at which point you proceed on flat to descending hills. There is an area during the descent, which for safety reasons is a “no-pass zone”, and you are required to hold your speed. Of course someone decides in the group that they are still going to pass other people on the descent and as I am thinking what a jerk this guy is and where are the referees they soon appear on their motorcycle and give him a penalty much to the delight to everyone he just passed. After mile 41 it is really fun, for awhile, until you hit the strong headwinds going back to the harbor. This is where it is really helpful to have aerobars. Oh and at mile 46 a 68-year-old woman blows by me on her bike. Not slowly but really fast. Did I mention she only had one leg? As you come back into the finish of the bike, you are now riding briefly next to the runners and for safety reasons you are again required to slow down, ride single file and not pass. Someone still does. A helpful note from Colleen’s race report is that there is one last short steep turn up from the beach to the street above (Surfrider) and it’s helpful to be in an easier gear so that you are not caught off guard. I am now back into T2 and the energy of the crowd. In this event your race number is affixed to the transition racks. Unlike T1 in which my bike was dangling like the last dead leaf on an empty barren tree, T2 was full of bikes and somewhere my shoes were buried beneath it. The volunteers very nicely saw me coming down the aisle in T2 and called out my number and immediately directed me to my shoes buried beneath the pile of bikes. I literally just shoved my bike into the crowded rack and had to crawl under the bikes to get to my shoes. Did I mention that I was not racked in my Age Group but with younger and faster people? I just wanted to remind you in case you forgot.

Nutrition on the bike consisted of:

24 oz bottle

- 2 scoops of Hammer’s Perpetuem (540 calories and 14 grams of protein)
- 3 salt tablets equaling 630 mg of sodium.
- I have my Garmin programmed to alert me every 15 min to take a swig from my nutrition bottle and I follow that with several sips of water from my aero bottle in the front of my bike. I refill the water bottle as I ride through the aid stations.

Consumption of 2 Gu’s with one Gu consumed 10 or so minutes before the bike ends.

What I did right and wrong:

In previous races I have made the mistake of going as hard as possible on the bike only to pay for that move on the run. I did not do that during this race. Kept my cadence high between 90 and 100 and I believe it helped me on the run.

Will increase my salt intake more. I felt cramping start in my leg at around mile 40 on the bike. Each race I continue to experience cramping in my leg and each race I up the sodium intake and it seems to reduce each race.

Run (estimate 2:30 11:30 per mile pace/actual 2:22 10:47 per mile pace)

I think the run is the best and easiest part of the race. Except for some small up and down walkways the race is for the most part flat, with 2 loops, a beautiful venue and very spectator friendly. You are running much of the race near the ocean with a great deal of energy and cheering. When I compare this run to Barb’s run this is much easier primarily because the two times I have done Barb’s race the temperature at the time of the run was in the 90’s and

most of the run is done in a quiet rural area. It is much more fun to run by the ocean with people cheering you on and music playing up and down the street.

During the off-season I had focused a great deal on my run including speed work and Coach Linda's winter trail run series (one of my favorite TLV events). Therefore I was quite pleased with my run for this event and this was my fastest run time for a 70.3. My mile times were pretty consistent during the run with my fastest times the last couple of miles. It was great to have Nadine, Laura Roesgen and Martha out on the course cheering me on as well. Martha did her usual jump out of the bushes and scare the heck out of me. Luckily I was running at that point.

What I learned:

- I now wear my fuel belt with the electrolytes that I train with.
- Next time I need to bring salt tablets on the run for cramping.

Estimated completion 6:42/Actual time 6:43

Summary

In summary here are the pros and cons of this race:

Pros

This is a beautiful venue and great course.

Close by so probably no hotel stay involved and minimal travel.

Ironman branded event so great bling and great organization.

Parking will not be a problem for your ocean swim practice because no one will be at the beach because it is too cold.

Will make you train in the winter. (See Cons)

Cons

Will make you train in the winter.

Although it is a protected swim in a harbor it is still an ocean swim. Salt water in your mouth, ocean swells etc.

Early season event especially for a ½ Ironman.

Weather can be a huge issue due to the time of year. Can be cold, windy and rainy. You can talk to Coach Linda about this. An 8-time participant!! Did you know that?

You will need to train in the winter, which includes ocean swims and probably many days on an indoor bike trainer.

Starts your triathlon season very early and could lead to burnout.

Hey thanks for reading!

Cindy Mason