

LA Herbalife Triathlon – Torrance, CA – September 21, 2014

Olympic, Sprint, Super-Sprint- 5k (unleashed on the course by the hundreds during the race.....)

TriLaVie Racers

Laura Roesgen, OLY, Podium 2nd Place (3:01)

Fleur Fong, OLY, First Time at this distance, 10th place (3:29)

Tanya Penn, SPR, Podium 1st Place

Donn Taylor, SPR, Podium 2nd Place



This was an inaugural race at this location, but with a race company who has produced local events for more than 25 years. I had high hopes and even proudly announced that I actually recommended this race. All looked good online. The course would be mildly technical with a nice “beach run” along a paved path (the famous bike trail that ultimately goes to Malibu).

Before I give more details about the race, I will say that I am going back to my well-informed position to avoid inaugural races. Solidly back to that position.



In the past weeks, the race routes were updated. Fleur attended a course overview and came back green at the gills. She said there are 5 hill repeats of LONG proportions. How long? Longer than El Toro? “Well... not sure...” Fleur said. But the run is now ON the beach for ½ the distance in soft sand, goes up and down the cliffs (think Crystal Cove but longer...) and then goes up a steep road. Repeat 3x for 6 miles. I was worried. But there were only 2 options: race or don’t race. Fleur was stealth and did not let her fear stop her. She had already missed a few race chances so she was ON! She asked me about preparation and I said, “Just get out to El Toro hill repeats as much as you can!” Laura – you all know Laura – she is training for SOMA but she is a BEAST on the bike, a strong runner and a very competitive swimmer. She hasn’t raced much that this year because she had 2 children graduating and moving onto high school and college. She NEEDED to race!! Tanya and Don are racing machines this year and they wanted a do-over from the Malibu Triathlon that had treacherous rip currents. They wisely chose the sprint distance – but perhaps they did not understand the challenge that laid before them.

Enough build up? Here are the details:

1. Swim = 1.03 miles with semi-surf entry and swells. That's not



so bad. Self-seated entry. You cross the timing mat when you are ready and swimmers enter the water 2-by-2. However, they started the sprinters right after the Olympians and the 2 courses actually **CONVERGED TOGETHER!!!** They came



from 2 different directions head into a buoy and then had to head to shore. Confusing? Entertaining? Head scratching? All that.

2. Transition = cliff climb twice the distance of Pac Coast/Crystal Cove.

3. Bike = immediate hill extending for 5 miles of unrelenting uphills. After about ½ a mile, your



“loops” start. Hill Repeat is a much more apt term. You climb double the grade of El Toro for 2 miles then descend that same grade. I estimate that bike speeds topped 40-45 mph. But wait... there were at least 5 hair-pin turns **ON THE DOWN HILL!!** As if that isn't odd enough, the turnaround is **INTO ONCOMING BIKE TRAFFIC!!** You do these turns on a residential street that is a narrow 4-car-width total area. Yikes. Yes, there were crashes. 3 I heard about from spectators. 1 I heard on the radio. 1 I witnessed the after-effect, 1 I heard

behind me at a turn and I couldn't look. The sound will be with me forever. Did I mention that the racers did this 4-mile hill repeat 5 times? Sprinters did it 2 times. It was brutal to watch. The course was crowded the whole race. So crowded there was scarcely time to cross the course and I spectated for 2 hours.

4. Run=immediate 1/2 mile up-hill, steep climb on a residential street. Downhill looked like “quad-thrashing” pain. Then descend the cliff to the sand and run a mile. Then climb back up the cliff and do this all **THREE TIMES** for OLY. At some point during the run (when Laura and Fleur were only ½ way done, a **MASS** of about 300 runners doing the 5k were unleashed on the run course with the triathletes. Running



5-6 abreast, they sprinted, bobbed and weaved through the crowds. It was priceless to watch. And, did I mention that they corralled the runners in the area where the cyclists were still coming in? Someone called it a “cluster_____” I have to agree.



5. **Finish Line and Expo:** Okay... this is by far the weirdest experience of my triathlon life. The race was sponsored by Herbalife. It seemed that EVERYONE was wearing Herbalife gear – trisuits (unitards), bike shirts, running shirts... etc. By the end of the race, the expo was completely overwhelmed by the sea of Herbalifers and I thought – honestly – I was at an Herbalife Convention. Half the expo was the Herbalife VIP area. When I asked who got into the VIP area, they said certain clubs and people who paid for it. When I asked a couple of nice young women...”Are you part of a club or training team that prepared for the event?” They looked at me like I was from Mars I press on. “Oh, I see all your shirts and kits and it looks like you are all part of a club.” The response (with rolled eyes...), “They gave us the shirts when we registered.” Oh... I guess I didn’t get the memo that race shirts are now mandatory DURING the race. Silly me!! And.. not really LA Triathlon shirts, but Herbalife 24 Hour Athlete apparel. Right.

Why am I writing so much when you have precious little time to read? Partly I have to share because it was an experience that went so outside my triathlon race experience.

MOSTLY.. I wanted to explain how 4 athletes representing TriLaVie – 2 of them Olympic Distance Triathletes – displayed the most courageous athletic prowess for that distance I have ever seen. Sure, they were scared. Sure, they may have wanted to turn around. But they didn’t. And not only that, they raced STRONG! I was amazed by their form and strength. I am SURE there were moments of pure pain and terror. I never had a clue. Smiles, focus and even an exclamation by Tanya... “That was FUN!!” Really. My hat’s off to Laura, Fleur, Tanya and Don. (And I rarely take that hat off!! LOL!!!)

