

I went into the water mildly apprehensive (how can you not be with a mass start?) but very confident. The water was 75 degrees – perfect. Mirror Lake was pristine, calm, soothing. I felt really good about being there, ready to go. In my mind, I went over the work I'd done to get there – now was the time to let it all happen. After the obligatory “whiz in the wetsuit” (all of you triathletes in the crowd will know exactly what I mean!) I knew that I was ready to roll! Everything is so calm ... there is a buzz in the crowd ... and then at 7:00am the cannon goes off! “The 2005 Ford Ironman USA is under way”!! All hell breaks loose and there are people splashing, pushing, and nudging – all at once. Initially, movement other than treading water was futile. That being the case, I took a fleeting glimpse of the world around me. I distinctly remember the strains of “Beautiful Day” by U2. Yes, it was most definitely a beautiful day!

I managed to stay out of trouble throughout the swim. I let a lot of people go by me, and even though I purposefully stayed off of the buoy line for the first 500m or so, I had people constantly crossing my line to get to the buoy line. My first goal had been accomplished – to seed myself appropriately and get some clear water. Eventually it all kind of worked its way out and I remember getting to the turnaround at 24-25 minutes and thinking “wow that’s really good”!

I had alternated my breathing pattern as necessary. Fortunately, I have spent much time working on bilateral breathing, and it was certainly proving to be helpful. On the out section, the sun was bright off of my right shoulder so I tended to breath off my left; I did the reverse coming back. Everything was going smoothly. Coming back, I managed to get the buoy line and just tried to stay smooth and consistent. I felt very comfortable. This was soon to become a consistent theme for the day.

Two days before the race, I had gone out for a swim on the course to check out some landmarks. I found that when I saw the Lake Placid Resort, I knew I was getting close, probably

within 300m of the finish of the loop. The water in the lake is so clear; you can see the bottom of the lake rise towards you as you get closer to the beach area.

I remember glancing to my right and seeing the Resort – bingo, I was 300m out. Then I started to see the bottom of the lake again – more motivation! I got out of the water, stood up, and my watch was at 47 minutes, which for me was a great first half. That was going to have me a long way under my goal of 1:45:00. I took my time getting back into the water, exclaimed “second verse, same as the first”. Mike Reilly made mention of the fact that I was on a bit of a stroll through, which I was! When I got back into the water and cruised out to the first buoy, it was about 48 minutes. I kept thinking “smooth and consistent” and really tried to get into a nice steady rhythm and was able to do so readily. The out section was spent drafting off some people and maintaining my rhythm. I got out there and it was around 1:13:00. In training, I always knew that if I was at the  $\frac{3}{4}$  point I was home free – I could easily hammer out another 1000m.

I headed towards home and I had a bit of an epiphany which stuck with me throughout the day. I had this thought – of the fact that I was having a very beautiful experience. It was all very calm and serene at that point – there weren’t many people around me, my swimming was as good as it’s been, my breathing was deep and controlled, my shoulders felt great, everything felt fantastic and it was very peaceful. That was something that I thought of a lot over the course of the next 15 hours. Everything was about being peaceful that day, it was about living in the moment, and it was about beauty and serenity. It was very Zen-like, almost meditative.

I saw the bottom of the lake rising towards me and I knew I was almost there but I tried to keep the excitement under control because I didn’t want to burn up a bunch of extra energy “just because”. I got out of the water, looked at my watch and it said “1:38:00” and I was a very happy man!

At this point, I had a rather large smile on my face because it was official – I'd made it back to terra firma! Yippee! I got to the wetsuit peelers, saints that they are, who graciously assisted me in the process. Let's face it – how often does a 39 year-old man have 2 women offer to remove his clothes – without buying dinner and drinks beforehand? (everyone needs to laugh right now). I initially walked the first section towards the street – trying to take in the accomplishment - and then with all of the people screaming and yelling it was hard not to run! Wetsuit in hand, I came down the hill towards transition – it's about a quarter mile from water to transition. This race is really a quadrathlon – swim, 400m run, bike, run! I saw Jen and LJ and the crew there on the run down to transition. I was a little choked up only because I realized at that point that I had done the hardest part of the race (for me), that I had seen myself through it mentally and physically, and that it had been better than any training swim or any training effort I'd ever had. What a great time to peak! J

My swim split was 1:38:47 ... and I am officially 1926th overall. Wow – were there any people behind me? It sure didn't seem like it!!

One interesting thing that you discover in an Ironman is the comparison between “race time” and “the rest of the world” time. It's almost like being in a parallel universe. As I am heading to transition, it's 8:38am ...