

The first bike loop went very very well. The climb out of town really wasn't so bad and I kept telling myself to be smooth, be patient. This race is all about patience (hmmmm funny how life is just the same). The sun was starting to rise and it was a gorgeous day in the Adirondacks. It was just on the cusp of being chilly. I started to put on my arm warmers and realized that was going to be craziness, so I took them right back off again. Fortunately I had managed to dry off completely in transition which helped prevent me from cooling off.

As you leave town, you're climbing fairly consistently for the first 8 or 9 miles. There were so many incredible spectators these people are the real deal! Die hard fans doesn't do them justice. There was a lady with a bell on the left hand side of the road, ringing it incessantly, and, as it turns out, ringing it through the second loop as well! A little further along, while we were still gradually climbing, there was a house on the left with a band playing out front and they were playing some pretty good blues when I went by! I wanted to stop and jam with them (give me that guitar, hoss!) but I figured that I still had work to do and lots of it. There were some scattered pockets of people all over the course. Then I got to the 9K (5.4 mile) descent into Keene. My goal was to push all of my descents as I had done in training, not to pedal hard but to ride them fast, smooth, to find a line, to really tuck in and go, aggressive but not risky. I think I ended up breaking about 42 mph but there was a bit of a wind in my face coming down into Keene. If it wasn't for the wind, I could have easily pushed 45+ mph. It felt awesome it was an awesome descent- you just go and go and go, descending, dropping down and going past the lakes and rivers. It is phenomenal and incredibly beautiful. What a rush!

I got to Keene (mile 15), made the hard left, and headed towards Upper Jay and Jay. Question how is it that Upper Jay resides south of Jay on a map? (I am told it's because it's up river). These are the things your mind wanders to during an Ironman! It's a reasonably flat section to Jay so I really wanted to try and maintain, conserve, ride within myself, and stay smooth. I'd initially noted some lower stomach crampiness which I attribute to gas and probably having ingested a lot of lake water during the swim. I stayed on my nutrition (a mix of Sustained Energy and HEED with water hand-ups). Throughout the course of the first loop, I really stayed on my nutrition plan pretty well. I adjusted the order of things but otherwise I ended up getting most of my nutrition ingested. Discipline.

I think around Upper Jay or Jay I was pushing an 18 mph average, which was a little faster than I thought I would do, but that's also given very good circumstances (race conditions) and feeling well within myself, very well within myself, and feeling very comfortable. My goal had been to aim for 17-18 mph average for the first 25 miles of the loop, with the knowledge that the climbs at the end of the loop would drop my average overall. I just kept spinning my legs and kept really trying to let it all come back to me and to try and position myself for the rest of the day ahead.

At Jay (mile 25) you turn left and head up a big gradual climb (3 miles) which I spun up without any problems. I passed a lot of people on all of the climbs (thank you, Dam loop training!) and felt really strong. All my climbing time in Austin had paid off. The descent from there takes you to the out and back section to Black Brook (miles 29 to 36 and then back to mile 43). I really tried to stay steady and consistent while I was out there. It went pretty smoothly. I finally saw Richard for the first time. As it turned out, he'd been about 21 minutes ahead of me coming out of T1. When I finally saw him, I was probably about 20 min down on him. I got to Black Brook (mile 36), and the people were dressed in hula skirts and going crazy. It was loud and they had a huge set of speakers playing some great music. I made the sharp U- turn and headed back. By that point I had taken another porta-potty break (in the hopes of moving some of this gas around) which helped.

Heading back

from Wilmington (mile 43), the rollers were tough as I knew they would be. Richard and I had ridden the course back in May and I'd discovered that the more vertical climbs weren't a problem but the rollers are tough because they continue to stair-step up. By mile 51 you're down to the last 5 main climbs all named on the side of the road. There is Little Cherry, Big Cherry, Mama Bear, Baby Bear, and Papa Bear all over the next 3 miles. By the time I arrived at Papa Bear, there were many spectators on the sides of the road like it was the Tour de France (or the Toor Day France for Bob Roll fans). I ended up passing more people on the bigger climbs, which of course evoked thoughts of King Of The Mountain (well, I was wearing a Rabobank-inspired jersey as long as I wasn't going to be timetrialing like Rasmussen I was going to be good!). Everyone is screaming and yelling as you're climbing. I might as well have been on Alpe d'Huez! I got to the top of that, turned right past Cobble Mountain Lodge (mile 54) and at that point, on the left hand side of the road, there was this guy standing out there with a stereo. As I went up the last little rise after Cobble Mountain Lodge I heard the strains of Paint It Black by the Rolling Stones the right band at the right time! Heading back to town, there was that one last short steep climb by the school, but you know you are almost home. Again, I passed another bunch of people (how many did I pass?). I arrived at special needs, looked at my watch and I was right around 3:27:00 (my goal was 3:30:00 per loop), felt very within myself, grabbed whatever I needed (yummy peanut butter crackers and another bottle of SE/HEED no need for any CO2 or tubes). At that point my nutrition was pretty well on target.

You then turn right onto Parkside which goes by the swim start and here again, it's just like being in the Tour with people on both sides of the street, cowbells, screaming, yelling, horns blaring. From there you turn left past the post office and church and make a short, steep descent past the Olympic Center. I pushed the descent - with all the extra energy from the spectators! There were people everywhere. It was awesome! At that point on the course, you are definitely partying like a rock star! I turned right to go up past the school, saw the support crew in all their glory, they screamed and yelled at me, and I was energized by the crowd. Everything felt great. I headed out on the second loop and all was well.

(Side note: in hindsight, there really wasn't a time during the day when all *wasn't* well, but I digress)

By this time it is 12:22pm my first lap split is 3:31:19 right on target. Everything was going smoothly but the wind was starting to pick up and it started to be a little bit warmer (high of 78 degrees), not terribly hot but it was warming up a bit. It was certainly no worse than anything I had ever experienced while training in Austin! (not even close). Training for Ironman is far tougher than racing it