

Heading back out of town, the first climb took me a little longer (I am glad I put on that 12-27 cassette) as I knew it would and I really pushed the descent again down into Keene although I had a gal that couldn't have been more than a 100 pounds fly by me, descending like a banshee (but I ended up catching her again later on the climbs - heheheh). Got to Keene (mile 71), turned, it was still looking pretty good but the winds had definitely started to pick up. Heading out to Jay was a little bit tougher. At that point, nothing really tasted good so I started to have my crackers, which really helped. It felt like there was some furry animal that had lodged itself in my mouth. I continued to drink as much as I would expect to given the conditions.

Made the turn at Jay (mile 81) the climb was much harder this time and I had to really spin my lowest gear for a good chunk of it, if not all of it. No worries - I still ended up passing people.

I saw Richard again on the out and back, and he was about 18 min ahead so I'd put a little dent in it but I figured that at that rate, it was going to be a long ways into the run before I was actually going to see him (although I *honestly* thought he might fade a bit on the last set of climbs). I headed down from Wilmington (mile 99) and those rollers all of a sudden became more difficult with a big headwind. My average speed dropped off significantly I watched my split go from 7:00:00 to 7:10:00 to 7:20:00 doing the calculations is good stuff to occupy your brain during an IM! The mile markers seemed to go by so slowly. But I kept thinking that if I pushed it too hard, I wasn't going to have anything left to run with and I wanted to have good strong running legs. Patience. I really just tried to spin, maintain my mechanics, tried to focus on being consistent and smooth, being patient, staying on my nutrition. I got to the last 5 climbs (mile 107), knocked them all out, passed more people, and felt really strong in the process. Then there was the right turn past Cobble Mountain Lodge (mile 110) last time it was the Rolling Stones, this time it was some Texas blues (note if you're a blues musician, you KNOW when it's Texas blues!!). I stopped to thank the man with the music telling him that Texas blues helps a guy from Austin at mile 110 and he tells me he's from Midland, TX. Small world!

I kept the cadence up as I was headed back to town. The last climb past the school (just after Cobble Mountain Lodge) is ruthless. It felt like a summit finish on the Tour (or what I would imagine it to feel like). At that point, you're within a mile or so of transition. Argh one last dagger in the heart!

I arrived at T2 my second lap was 4:07:51 and my bike split was 7:39:10. The wind on the return had taken it's toll - but also knew that I had to moderate my effort and keep the day under control. Take what the day brings. Racing the day on my terms. Patience.

At this time it's 4:34pm amazing how the time passes so quickly. I got off the bike 1786th overall I'd passed 140 people on the bike!