

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 its 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!