

I kept knocking it out, tried to run and walk as I could and, although I wasn't on my specific plan, I tried to adjust it to run the downs and flats and walk the ups and the aid stations. I tried to consume a little more water and Gatorade. I got to about mile 14 where this house of crazy people was and they were barbecuing, which smelled really really good at that point. Solid food was starting to sound like a really good idea!

I ended up running with a guy, I think he was from Ohio, who had just turned 50 and was on his third year anniversary of remission from prostate cancer. He had his LiveStrong band on. He reminded me of the need for regular prostate exams after the age of 40 - it saved his life. Ironman is a long day with a lot of life lessons and a lot of great people.

I headed out onto River Road again (15.5 miles) and at about mile 16 I was walking a bunch - be patient and let the race come back to you. I knew I was going to be ok time-wise. I didn't seem to have the zip that I once had but that was ok because I knew that if I just stayed patient, I would be alright. My feet at that point were incredibly sore, no blisters and as a matter of fact I got through this race without blisters or chafing at all, but my feet were just plain sore. My legs were just plain sore. My arms were sore. Everything was just sore.

I kept adjusting my game plan accordingly. At the aid station between miles 16 and 17, I decided that I probably needed more sodium. At that point I'd already tried chicken broth which was ok, it seemed to help, but it didn't really address the furry animal sensation. I knew that I was walking so it would be a good opportunity to consume whatever I needed. I wasn't going at a hard enough effort level to make it harder on my GI system so I thought I would try some solid food. I thought of Josh and thought think like an ultrarunner. I took a handful of pretzels (for the sodium and carbohydrate because I knew they would be high in both) and flushed them down with a full cup of water. Great. I grabbed two chocolate cookies - bit into the first one and thought I'd died and gone to heaven. It was fantastic. It was so incredibly tasty. (your senses are heightened during Ironman, trust me) I got to the next aid station (and the next) and did the same thing - I ate 8 to 10 pretzels and a couple more cookies at each aid station. At about mile 18, after I'd gone through the last aid station on the way out (which is the same as the first aid station on the way back), I started to feel a bit better - more zip in the legs. I hit the turn around (18.8ish miles) and was definitely starting to feel better. Around mile 19 I think, I noticed that things started to come back a little bit more, and now I was running more than I was walking.

Sunset hits at 8:30pm. I distinctly remember that it became pretty dark out in the forest! My feet weren't quite so sore (probably from the walking!) and all of a sudden things started to feel really good. Then I started running more. My turnover was fantastic and I kept thinking about Lance Armstrong, and I kept thinking about Paul Sherwen saying oh he's ticking the legs over, he's ticking ticking ticking them over and I kept thinking you know, I can do that, just tick them over, I've done this in training, I can turn them over, I can do it now. So I kept at it. From mile 20 to the finish, I had 6 miles of fantastic running. I would bet my last 10K was as fast as my first 10K - excluding the two monster hills. My legs came back to me. Let the race come back to you. Be patient. It echoed in my mind. As I was running in the dark, I realized that it is incredibly relaxing out there (with your obligatory glowstick of course!) - very peaceful. All you hear is your foot strikes, your breathing, and the brook that runs beside you, and that's it.

It got a bit cooler so I put on my long sleeve shirt (that I'd put in my special needs bag). I kept thinking that I might see Rich but never got a glimpse of him. I kept hoping because I knew that if I could see him, I could catch up to him, but it didn't happen, I never did see him other than at the turnarounds. So I kept ticking off the miles. At mile 22, I headed back up the hill towards town. The end was near - I

could taste it. You can hear the finish area from a long way out of town. At about mile 24 I stopped to dance briefly with some gals on the street as I headed up Mirror Lake Drive. How could I turn down 3 ladies that wanted to dance? Everything felt great at that point. No worries. The legs felt awesome. I got to mile 25 and talked to four ladies that were out there cheering in the darkness (they reminded me of ♦Desperate Housewives♦ as they sat in front of their palatial home) - they were wonderful on both loops. Then I turned and headed for home.</p>
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