

REV 3 QUASSY 2013: Race Report and the Take-away Message

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Middlebury, CT – Rev3 Quassy was held on the hottest weekend of the year as of June 2nd and 3rd 2013. After 6 months of cold, raw, wet, miserable weather, summer came early and the temperatures stayed in the 90's the entire week leading up to and through New England's first Olympic distance and Half Iron distance races of the year.

The Rev3 triathlon series has been running since 2009 and is the major competition for the Ironman 70.3 series. Notable for going out of their way to make their races a great experience for you, the REV3 races seriously give you a lot for your money.

The early summer Oly and Half are held at the Quassy Amusement Park in Middlebury, CT, making it not only a great destination for the triathlete; it's also the one race that your family looks forward to!

This year Team Pegasus had 12 athletes racing: Ashley Liffers, Kara Alterio and Laura Gillis doing the Olympic distance, and Ed McGovern, Paul Economos, Steve Hall, Charlie Henry, Jay Oberton, Tony Knight, Kevin Weldon and Keryn Murphy doing the Half Iron.

Mike and I drove to Hampden, CT with our son-in-law, Tim Snow Friday night. Tim was racing Sunday, and we had athletes racing Saturday and Sunday, and we wanted to be there to support them. After checking in to our hotel, we grabbed a quick dinner, unpacked, and went to bed early to get ready for the long hard days ahead of us.



Rev 3 Olympic Distance Race

Saturday morning we headed down to the race and arrived just as the swimmers were going in the water. We positioned ourselves on the course and waited for athletes to come out of T1. I usually like to take pictures of T1 because you see so many crazy (read: dangerous) things, and I want my athletes to avoid those situations wherever



possible. The dangerous moves are 1) trying to get on your bike RIGHT outside the mount line, instead of moving several feet past the mount line where there is much less chaos, 2) trying to do things immediately that can wait (ripping into your Powerbar), 3) trying to do things that you should have done in transition (put on your gloves and sunscreen; and start your Garmin) and 4) the ultimate race hazard: extremely poor bike mounting including thinking that it's faster to mount your bike with your shoes on the pedals or not being able to clip in without looking at your feet. Here's a tip: a moving bike is a stable bike, so if you have to slow down to 3 mph and look at your feet to clip in, you are asking for a crash.

We saw Ashley, Kara and Laura exiting T1 and heading out on the bike, and again a couple of times on the run. The day was hot and airless and I was really proud of how all my athletes handled the conditions.

Once everyone was safely in, we quickly made our way back to the hotel for a shower, then headed to the restaurant to meet with athletes who had done the Olympic distance and those who were about to do the Half Iron.

We had lunch at an Italian restaurant in Waterbury where we shared a few laughs and talked about last minute race details. Tim joined us at the restaurant after attending the pro meeting and a couple of hours later, we said our goodbyes and the athletes headed out to packet pick up, bike racking, and the athlete's meeting, while Mike, Tim and I headed back to the room to watch the Bruins defeat the Philly's! Cait had done her 6-hour workout from home and then drove 2.5 hours to join us in Connecticut. It was lights out early to get ready for another long day.

Rev 3 Half Iron

We arrived at the race start a little before 6 am so that Tim could get ready for the 6:50 pro start. As soon as the athletes started going in the water Mike and I went for a run, Cait hopped on the trainer, and we got our workouts in while running back to T1 every few minutes to watch athletes head out on their bikes. When the workouts were done we had a 'camp shower' and got changed and ready to cheer. We grabbed a gallon of water, 2 packages of Power Bar energy blasts and the megaphone and headed out onto the run course.



This race is very much like the Lake Placid Ironman. Not only are both races hilly, because they are both so close to where we live, inevitably there are scores of people we knew who were racing or watching the race. We had friends (and family) in the pro race and throughout the ranks, so we were busy all day, cheering as athletes went by us in both directions. Because we had heard that there had been a lot of crashes on this very technical course, we were very relieved when all our athletes made it onto the run course.

Mike is great at making friends, so when I ran back to the car to check on Cait (she had finished her trainer ride and run and was now doing TRX against a tree), Mike made friends with the folks from Wattie Ink, and suddenly we had a huge cheering section. At the end of the day, it was a great weekend for Team Pegasus. Twelve athletes started and twelve finished. All but one did this race for the first time. And for most doing the half, it was their first or second half ever! Congratulations all, on a job well done. It's never the easy races you talk about. It's always the ones with extreme weather, outrageous hills, or a gnarly swim that become part of your race legend.

But even though what doesn't kill you is supposed to make you stronger, sometimes a race like this can be a confidence killer. I try to impress on my athletes that until you've been in this game for a while, it's a mistake to have expectations of a finish time. And although *you race for place not pace*, when there are hundreds of people in your division, your place among them isn't always the best way to judge your performance. But even though it's a race, maybe where you place isn't always the best way to judge your performance, either.

What Would You Change?

When my athletes do a race, I always like to ask them after, what – if anything – would you do differently? Even if it's a great race, there are sometimes things you would do differently. And sometimes, even though you are not thrilled with the result, there is nothing that you would do differently the next time. And sometimes you know that you need to do *something* differently, but you don't know what. When you want to improve at a given distance, you need to understand the things that are within your control to change and go after those, instead of focusing on that which you cannot change.

Every course is different and the conditions are very seldom the same year to year, and those all contribute to your overall time. So although you might be slower on a particular course on a given day, it doesn't mean the slower race was worse. Weather and course conditions are things you cannot change.



So let's focus on that which is in your control. Those are the things that you can change in order to improve in general, and to have a better outcome on the same course were you to do it again.

First you want to look at your heart rate data for the race. You need to look at how closely you stayed within your heart rate zones for bike and run. You also want to compare the elevation of the course against the heart rate spikes and splits. You need to differentiate between whether you were 'slow' due to things that were in your control - ie, staying within your zones, following your fueling plan, good execution of the hills, etc., or were you slower on the bigger hills or because the temperature rose 20 degrees over the course of the race.

When you are analyzing your race you need to be honest about how closely you followed your fueling plan. Were you religious about it, or did you approximate it? Did you take exactly what was on the plan at the prescribed intervals without adding anything else? On a day with extreme conditions or with tough competition, or if you have lofty goals or it's a longer race, there is very little margin for error. Even being slightly off on your fueling will affect your race.

What about your transitions? I noticed that some folks had a T1 that was longer than 3 minutes. That's a pretty long time, especially since the run from swim to bike isn't that long. You can always take time off by simply practicing quick execution of getting from one modality to the next. And I do mean practicing! You also have to be organized. Everything should be laid out in the most efficient way for you to put it on, and it should be laid out the *same way* every time! The clock is still running during transitions, so that's also part of the race.

If the course is hilly you want to get a [climbing cassette](#) put on your bike. Bring your bike to your favorite bike shop and tell them that your coach advised you to have a climbing cassette installed. That will give you an extra gear or two so you can spin up the hills (or more closely approximate spinning up a hill). This will save wear and tear on your legs.

We talk about keeping your heart rate down in order to conserve energy. In fact, anything longer than a sprint is all about energy management. You start the day with a certain amount of 'energy' at your disposal. It includes stored energy, and immediately available energy as well as what you are able to take in and process along the course. If you are able to keep your heart rate well below threshold, you will use more 'stored' fat as fuel, which is longer-lasting, and less of the carbs that you've just ingested, which will burn off more quickly. You will also be able to process what you are taking in, rather than having food and fluid sit in your gut and slosh around.

On a hilly course, it's almost impossible to never have your heart rate go over threshold. But if you go over your threshold frequently, or go over and don't work to settle back down, or if you go WAY over your threshold, you are ['burning matches'](#). That's another way of saying that you are using up your available fuel far too quickly.

In addition to conserving energy, you want to preserve your leg muscles. It's possible to keep your heart rate down, but still ride in a way that taxes your legs muscles more than you need to. When your cadence is low, leg power vs. momentum is what moves the bike. You may gain a little speed by pushing a harder gear, but eventually you are fatiguing your leg muscles faster than if you used an easier gear and higher cadence. You might get to T2 five minutes faster with the lower cadence, but if it causes you to struggle more on the run, or if you risk cramping with every step you take because you've exhausted your leg muscles, it wasn't worth it. A climbing cassette will allow you to keep the cadence high, even on a hilly course.





A few more minutes can be saved by taking care of the little things, which are perfected by a lot of practice. How quick are you on the downhill? Are you skilled and confident descending and turning? Can you eat and drink without slowing down? What about refilling the water bottles? Are you fast at that? Can you stay in a tuck when you are on the flat and downhill sections, or do you come out of the tuck frequently? Each time you do, you cause wind resistance which slows you down. A perfect bike fit and working on your flexibility will help here.

If you choose to wear an aero-helmet, are you able to keep your head still? Can you hold a steady line while riding? If you

have to pee during the race (and if you are hydrating properly you should), can you do it while you are on the bike? And an even more highly developed skill - can you pee while running? Not saying you need to learn that if the idea is abhorrent, but you need to know that this is what the pros do. I tell you that because people *do* look at the pro times and wonder what stands between 'us and them'. Not that I'm saying that being able to pee while running is the *only* thing that separates us!

What about your weight? Are you as light as you can be without sacrificing power? If having bulky muscles is important to you esthetically, you will never be as fast as someone who has the same power as you but has a lean frame with no apparent muscle. But this is a very fine point and not meant to be used as an excuse. If you still have a long way to go in your training to be a tri-stud, having biceps doesn't give you a pass.

Fortunately none of my athletes received penalties at Rev3. But if you don't learn the [rules](#), you risk getting a penalty that can spell the difference between the podium and the rest of the field. Or like this guy, it can cost you your race:

Olympic	1034	MacLean, Trevor	M	25-29 Male	Males Under 35	00:00:01.000	DQ for 5.10a drafting , 5.10d blocking , 5.10f position
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So that covers many of the small things you can do to improve your race.

And then there are the big things. Like experience. It's a natural assumption that because you have been training for something harder and longer than you have trained for anything in your life, you should be 'better at this' by now. And what defines 'better at this'? It has to be where you fall within your division. How are you compared to all the other people of the same gender and in the same 5-year age range who did this race? If you are 'below the fold' (in the lower half of the whole), you might be tempted to beat yourself up. No one strives to be below average. But how long have you been doing this compared to the others in your division? Do you think you should be better than someone who has been doing this for years? This is a list of races done by the guy who won the men's 40-44 division:

2012						
Ironman World Championship 2012	Julian Underwood	HI	35	10/13	10:15:29	
Ironman Mont Tremblant 2012	Julian Underwood	CAN	35	8/19	9:39:03	
Amica Ironman 70.3 Rhode Island 2012	Julian Underwood	RI	35	7/08	4:36:58	
Ironman 70.3 Mooseman	Julian Underwood	NH	39	6/03	4:47:43	
Road To The Pogue 10K 2012	Julian Underwood	VT	38	5/12	39:19	
2011						
Zack's Place Thanksgiving Turkey Trot 5K 2011	Julian Underwood	VT	38	11/23	18:32	
Vermont Sun Sprint Triathlon #1 2011	Julian Underwood	VT	35	6/26	1:05:18	
Road to the Pogue	Julian Underwood	VT	37	5/14	37:55	
Season Opener Duathlon/Triathlon 2011	JULIAN UNDERWOOD	MA	35	5/08	57:45	
2010						
Half Vermont Journey 2010	Julian Underwood	VT	35	8/29	4:55:16	
Lake Dunmore Triathlon 2010	Julian Underwood	VT	35	8/08	2:22:32	

Vermont Sun Triathlon 2010	Julian Underwood	VT	35	6/27	1:09:00
2009					
18Th Covered Bridges Half Marathon	Julian Underwood	VT	35	6/07	1:52:11
2008					
Patriot Triathlon 2008	JULIAN UNDERWOOD	MA	35	7/05	5:01:37
2008 Covered Bridges Half Marathon	Julian Underwood	VT	34	6/01	1:32:07
Mt Tom Road To The Pogue	JULIAN UNDERWOOD	NH	30	5/10	39:39
2007					
16Th Annual Covered Bridges Half Marathon 2007	Julian Underwood	VT	33	6/03	1:33:51
Mt. Tom Road To The Pogue	Julian Underwood	VT	33	5/12	41:20
2005					
Shipbuilders Triathlon	Julian Underwood	ME	30	7/04	2:05:16
Nissan Xterra West - Short	Julian Underwood	CA	30	5/15	2:40:38
Mt Taylor Winter Quadrathlon 2005	Julian Underwood	NM	30	2/19	4:24:52
2004					
Nissan Xterra Usa Championship	Julian Underwood	NV	29	9/26	3:03:50
Aspen High Country Triathlon	Julian Underwood	CO	29	8/21	1:27:28
Leadville Trail 100	Julian Underwood	CO	30	8/14	8:02:02
Crested Butte Bank Trails Triathlon 2004	Julian Underwood	CO	30	7/25	2:08:45
Nissan Xterra Central Championship	Julian Underwood	CO	29	7/18	2:23:38
Boogie's Diner Buddy 5M	Julian Underwood	CO	29	7/04	30:01
2003					
11Th Annual Aspen Duathlon/Triathlon Triathlon	Julian Underwood	CO	29	8/23	1:29:07
2000					
Ocean State Marathon - 2000	JULIAN UNDERWOOD	RI	27	11/12	3:11:16
Apple Harvest Ramble Ten Miler 2000	JULIAN UNDERWOOD	MA	26	9/30	1:04:15
1999					
Ocean State Marathon	Julian Underwood	RI	-	11/14	3:35:10
Apple Harvest Ramble Ten Miler	JULIAN UNDERWOOD	MA	25	10/02	1:05:10

You'll notice that Julian Underwood has done at least 36 races over the course of 14 years. He's done everything from marathons, to XTerra off-road triathlons, to half-iron, full- iron and finally last year qualified for Kona. You'll also notice one other thing. If you click on the Ocean State Marathon above, it will bring you to the page where Julian's result it. He is 8 from the bottom. But look who is 2 from the bottom! I don't know this guy and randomly picked him as an example, but I thought it was a funny co-incidence.

So the message here is be patient. If you want to get better at this, learn from every hard experience and the next time you are in the same situation, use what you learned. These things are all part of the process. In order to get better you have to keep challenging yourself. And when you really challenge yourself, the first time you do it won't be the best you are ultimately capable of.

If you don't want to be patient – if doing an Ironman (or whatever your main goal is) – is one and done; just something on your bucket list, then you need to remove the time goal. Just go for the experience and embrace the ups and downs. In fact, no matter what your goals are, my advice would still be to embrace the ups and downs and enjoy the experience. And don't shy away from that which is hard! Especially on your road to Ironman.

The reason I wanted people to do this race was 1) so I would have a baseline to see where everyone is at this point in time and 2) so that they would all have a really hard workout. Every time you successfully complete a hard workout and then allow yourself to recover, you are making the A race easier.

If you are still improving it's too soon to measure what you are capable of. Don't judge yourself by one race and avoid the temptation to keep testing yourself. Keep plugging along. Get fitter, stay uninjured, and learn along the way. ☺