

## IM Puerto Rico 70.3 Race Report

BEN RIORDON

March 19<sup>th</sup>, 2017

### Prerace

I arrived in PR on Thursday with time for a little training on Friday and to get a feel for the conditions. My condo (Villa Condada, no longer associated with Hilton but booked on AirBNB) looked out over the swim exit. It could be any closer!

It has been a pretty hectic past few months so I was apprehensive about my swim preparation in particular. I'm also a bit closer to my winter weight than I would like (around 153-155 lb).

Friday morning I walked over the bridge to the swim start area and went for a short swim. This is my first non-wetsuit swim. I did pick up a swim skin (Roka Viper elite) last month, but my testing in the pool didn't show that it made a huge difference (maybe 1 sec per hundred over five repeats). The lagoon water was really warm (around 79deg) and calm. From the bridge to the resort area there could be some small waves and a little current, but nothing significant. I did need to aim a bit towards to ocean to stay on track to the swim ramp.

The wind was pretty strong on Friday, maybe 20-30mph. My short ride wasn't really that great. I rode on the bike path towards Old San Juan and a little bit west of the resort area. Between the traffic and the wind I really didn't get my hr up too much. The crosswind gusts were pushing me sideways a good amount, so I decided to switch to my lower profile front wheel. After reassembling my bike with a new chain and brake pads everything seemed to be in good order. The pavement seemed reasonably good in this area, so tire pressures should be on the high side.

Lisa arrived Friday night. Other than the bike check-in on Saturday, we pretty much just relaxed by the pool. Tough life! My pre-race dinner was a turkey sub by the pool. Before bed, I did the same sodium loading that I did for Mont Tremblant and turned in around 9. The club nearby seemed to start the dance music around this same time and continued (thump, thump) until 3:30am. I barely slept at all before my 4:30 alarm.

My prerace oatmeal container turned out to be some kind of crappy microwave muffin mix that accidently made it to my bag. I ate it anyway, but I kind had to force it...wasn't really hungry. I drank a bottle of Gatorade and a Gu gel to top off the tank.

Unlike all of the days prior, the wind completely shut off on race morning, so I guess my wheel change wasn't the best idea. It's better than the other way around I suppose. The swim was a water start and I ended up in the middle towards the front. My plan was to go out pretty steady with the hopes of keeping any time lost to a minimum. The start was bumpy as expected, but after a few hundred yards it

really opened up. I may have drifted a bit as well since the main pack was off to my right. I pulled over and joined the remainder of the group as we started the process of weaving through all the other age groups. I took a pretty hard kick to the face, but after a few stunned moments I took inventory...everything still worked. I hate wave starts. In the end, I followed some feet that seemed to be going at a decent pace. When we did get split apart while overtaking slower swimmers it didn't seem like the extra effort to pull ahead would gain me much, so I stuck with the drafting.

The transition run was quite long. I put some very racy Sanuks by the swim exit to protect my feet during the run. Old running shoes would have been better since I fumbled with these for a bit. During the run it seemed like I did regain some lost ground though, so it was worth it. The transition went smoothly until I realized at the bike exit that I still had my swim skin (pulled down around my waist) on. I had to run back to remove it, losing at least a minute. Stupid.

The weather was expected to be cloudy with a chance of showers, but the sun was out full force. As always the humidity was very high. My hope was to put a little bit of extra juice on the bike since heat won't be an issue. In the end I held a steady NP of 210W, which wasn't really that high anyway. I was moving pretty quickly and before long I passed enough people that the race started to really thin out.

After about five miles, I noticed a pair of two riders drafting my wheel. This was pretty annoying. I let them pass, but they would slow right down so after dropping back I surged to get past them. They both would immediately jump on my wheel again...which went on for a few more miles. At the lap turnaround point, one of the pros (#39, Jarrod Shoemaker I think) had just turned around. These two jumped on his wheel and started drafting him! There was a bit of yelling and hand waving. I rode behind this scene until the far turnaround point and they rode away together. Unbelievable. One of the two was in my age group as well. On the second lap I caught them both and put in some effort to drop them, which worked (at least until the next aid station). In the end I put a few minutes into them before T2.

Nutrition was pretty standard for the bike (1.5 bottles + 2 Gus + 2 salt tabs per hour). I felt pretty good, other than some muscle aches in my piriformis (I think...right where I sit) and lower back.

T2 went well, except I hadn't put speed laces on my shoes. Another :30sec lost.

Although it wasn't super-hot, I knew we would be feeling the sun and humidity so I paced my run slowly from the start. My hr on the bike was around 160-162bpm, so I kept it at this level. By keeping my hr down, I hoped to keep my core temp from getting too high. I took Gatorade at every aid station (plus water over my head and ice if they had it). I'm not sure what type of Gatorade it was. My three gels were safety pinned to my race belt on the top tab with a little bit of duct tape to hold them steady. My pace on the flat sections was around 7:30/mi. My legs felt tired at first, but I felt better as things loosened up. My piriformis muscles just got worse as I ran though. Every hill I dropped my pace to keep a level hr so my mile splits varied quite a bit. On the last leg to the finish I picked it up a bit...maybe 7:15-7:20 pace (not sure). I had one more gel on my belt at the 1:30 mark, but I felt good enough and decided not to take it. There was more in the tank, but I felt like maintaining steady temp/hr worked well. I finished strong and felt pretty good after...no major dehydration or anything.

My finishing place of 7<sup>th</sup> in my age group shifted to 6<sup>th</sup>. Maybe someone got DQ'd, I don't know. If there was drafting in the leading group like there was near me it wouldn't be a surprise (the refs were pretty lax though). Not to sound too resigned, but I feel like I've come to the realization that cheating is normal for these races so while I'm disappointed, it's not a big surprise. In the end I'm happy with my race. I feel like my body responded well to what I asked of it. The heat didn't kill me by any stretch. My time was just a few minutes off a podium spot, with lot of areas to fix.

#### **What went well:**

- I think the bike leg was pretty strong my time seemed to compare well with my AG.
- The swim wasn't stellar, but I probably didn't lose TOO much time and I felt decent.
- The nutrition plan worked fine. No issues.
- No one enjoyed the heat much on the run, but I felt like I managed it ok.
- Lisa likes watching the half iron-distance races much more. The full distance is a long day for everyone!

#### **What didn't go as well:**

- For a podium spot, I lost too much time on the swim. If I want faster feet, I need to practice going out harder and have the swim fitness to recover.
- My piriformis muscle was a problem. I've fixed this with stretching in the past. Talk with Beth about a short warmup ride and stretch out before dropping my bike off the day before. I think a whole day off is also leaving me a bit tight.
- Some dumb stuff in transition lost me time: laces, swim skin, poor shoes for the run to T1
- My bike variability index was probably high as I tried to get rid of annoying drafters (I haven't reviewed my power file)
- My bike computer took about five minutes to boot up and seems to be flaky. It's probably time to trade up.
- My morning nutrition wasn't as dialed in as it needs to be for a full.
- The run time wasn't my best. It was hot, but maybe I can get some time back by acclimating a little more. Texas will be flatter, so I won't lose so much time by managing the hills.