

2010 Kona Race Report - Cait Snow

Oct 16th, 2010 : 04:30pm

As I sat by the pier Saturday morning, thoughts raced through my mind. *I feel too good. Something's going to go wrong. Did I forget something? Chip, cap, goggles, tires pumped, SRM calibrated, water bottles filled, PowerBars and gels in bag, HR monitor on, transition bags dropped off... Everything's in place. Relax... Oh, I'm so anxious! I really want to do well today! We've worked so hard. Tim, Mikaela, mom -they've made so many sacrifices! I want it to have been worth it. What if it doesn't come together??* While thinking these rational thoughts, I looked over at the mountain to my left, and noticed that the sky was starting to brighten. I glanced at a strangers watch. 5:58. *In about an hour the sun is going to crest over the edge of that mountain, and it's going to be spectacular. Today you'll be out by the turn-around buoys. Tomorrow... Who knows? But it will happen, again. No matter how today goes, that sun will rise again tomorrow. And Tim, mom, Mikaela, your friends? They'll all still be there. This is a big deal to you today. But to the world there are far greater concerns! Breathe...*

I then spent 10 minutes getting into my new, fully textile [PZ3TX](#), taking my time to gently get this snug little number on just right. *Ok, now I just need some kind of superpower to make this getup appropriate.* This time I got in a nice long warm-up. Before I got in the water, though, the announcement was made: Chrissie Wellington would not be toeing the start line. *Wow! That wasn't a rumor! That changes the whole race!... Sort of... Doesn't change what I can do, though!* And in I dove.

We lined up between the floating Ford (fascinates me every time: a car on a floaty) and the ginormous, inflatable PowerBar bottle, with the usual jockeying for position while volunteers on surfboards formed a human barricade and Mike Riley warned against "drifting" forward. Jesse and I had discussed specifically who I should try to go with on the swim during our pre-race chat. I looked around and to my delight I found three of the four girls right next to each other. I blatantly followed them around for the final 5 minutes before the cannon was fired. Rookie-stalker style. As they settled on a start position a guy cut in front of me and wedged in right next to my gals. *Not cool!* I was about to elbow my way back in between them when he turned his head. Andy Potts. *Ok, right on their feet is good!* And that's exactly where I was when the cannon went off. That is until I was quite literally piggy-backing the athlete in front of me. The surfboards were never moved. We swam into and then over not only the boards, but the volunteers that were sitting on them. *What the?! That was bizarre!!*

I hammered away through the entire swim, really pushing during the first half and then maintaining my position on the return side. I lost my swim cap (AGAIN) just after the second turn buoy. Luckily my elastic held up this time (last year it did not!), so the Medusa-effect was minimal. As usual, I had no idea my swim was really going, just that

it felt great. *This could be right on (mid-57's) or it could be over an hour. They should really put clocks on those buoys!* When my hand finally hit the sand and I picked my head up the clock read 57:37. *Nice! Now run!* I proceeded to trip up the stairs, but so did everyone else, so I didn't really lose any time.

I bombed through T1 (probably not spending quite enough time with the sunscreen) and out onto the bike course. The plan was to attack this race a bit differently (similar to Louisville), which entailed using heart rate more than I usually do during a race. Standing on the pedals, pushing up Palani, I looked down to check my HR: 82. *Hmmmm... Is that possible? No! Don't be a clown! You're caffeinated and riding uphill at the beginning of the Ironman World Championship. Your heart rate is NOT 82!... GREAT! How am I going – NOPE! Don't do that! Focus! What can you control? You've done this before. You know what it should feel like. If you have to do the entire race based solely on perceived exertion, then so be it!* I continued to push along while my HR continued to "drop". Then, somewhere between the top of Palani and the airport, the readings began to look a bit more accurate. Throughout the ride I focused on keeping myself in the game while not blowing myself up. And I robbed those aid stations! I took at least one bottle of sports drink, and two bottles of water (for pouring on the dome) at every 5 miles. I kept cool! I was passed by quite a few girls on the way into Hawi (a few of which I saw hanging out under yellow tents shortly thereafter), found the winds gusty but manageable up in the windy "city", and then passed a few girls on the way back to Kailua. I felt pretty good as I passed the airport for the second time, and was anxious but excited for the run.



Thank you, American Classic, for rushing the sweet race wheels in time for race day!

I spent a little more time in T2, really making sure I got a solid layer of sunscreen, and then off I went. *How's this going to feel? The bike went well, but does that mean you pushed too hard? We'll see!* Last year I had a tough run. I had a bit of an issue with the heat and didn't know how to handle it, AND I went out way too fast. I crumbled as the marathon went on. This year I made some major adjustments to keep cool, and I was given strict orders to keep the pace under control through the first portion of the course. I looked at my Garmin a lot during that first mile! Nailed the pace, and then settle in for the Ali'i Dr. section.



Tim's always good for high-volume, in-your-face encouragement!

I felt great! I felt great all the way through mile 14. Then things started to hurt a bit. Not too bad, but a little uncomfortable. As I came up to the energy lab, the pace was starting to creep a little bit, but only by seconds. *Come on! Keep pushing! It's supposed to hurt!* If I had robbed the aid stations along the bike course, I straight up looted those on the run course! Sponges, water on the head, sports drink, ice down the top, sports drink, water on the head, sponges for the road! EVERY TIME! It was awesome! It made those last 6 miles manageable. As I got closer to Palani, I caught more girls, and almost every one of them gave me a word of encouragement as I did. It was pretty amazing! Then I saw Tim. He was yelling like a maniac, "Come on, Cait! You can get 3 more! That'll put you in 8th!" I half-yelled, half-huffed, "I'm trying!", and got back, "Shut up and run!" Not sure if it was out loud or not, but I laughed. So did the lady with the 3 kids standing on the side of the road. At this point I was about a half mile from the turn back onto Palani. I could see the back of the next girl. I got her seconds before the turn. Then I could see them. The next two girls were right there. This is when I made the toughest decision of my day: maintain my already painful pace and settle for 10th (a thrilling result in its own right), or just absolutely through myself down this final hill and try to move into 9th or 8th. *Oh, man! I don't know! I'm already running as hard as I can! Can I push any harder? What if I try but I don't get them? No one will know if I just hold this pace... GO! You'll know! If you fall on your face, then so be it! GO! GO!* Now the tunnel vision and loss of hearing set in. All I could see were the two girls. All I could hear was my breathing and that voice. I passed the first girl right at the turn onto Kuakini, and focused on the back of 8th place. *She's pushing. Push harder! GO! Come on! GO! Pass hard! Don't let her come with you!* I moved into 8th just before the turn onto Hualili. I know people were lining the streets and cheering like crazy, but I couldn't make out faces or specific voices (apparently my mom was right there screaming her head off, and we have video footage of a friend of ours doing the same, but I don't remember seeing either of them after mile 10...). *She's right on your heels! She's waiting for you to falter! GO! GO!* Then I saw Mikaela on the side of Ali'i jumping up and down like a psycho! *Almost there! This has got to be the longest quarter mile EVER! GO! I can't feel my fingers. GO! She'll run right over you if you don't hurry up!*



Almost there!

And then I was done. I was spent. But I was also caffeinated. Not good for those who had to spend the rest of the evening with me! 😊



Uh-oh! Someone's wound up!