

Weekend in Lake Placid

So, this is officially the first entry to my blog!

I have written race reports before, and my athletes know I write a lot about my training and racing theories, but this is my attempt to keep a public journal about my incredibly lucky (IMHO) life.

This weekend was actually a typical summer weekend for me in that it was spent watching clients race, and training with clients. It started very early (4:30) on Saturday morning when my daughter Mikaela and I headed to the Cape from Duxbury to volunteer at the Hyannis Sprint Triathlon and watch Keryn Murphy and Rachael Desantis race. The Hyannis Sprint gets nearly 900 athletes and about 850 of them are new to the sport, so it's always a good check on the state of the sport.

Even though the water was nearly glass-like, the race director, Rich Havens had shortened the swim to 1/8 mile due to cold water. As everyone in New England knows, we have had a very mild (read: cold) spring and the water temp was probably about 65 degrees. Not everyone who does the Sprint wears a wetsuit and since many are beginners, he was probably concerned about people getting hypothermia.

Anyway, it was a good chance for Mikaela and I to see athletes we hadn't seen in a while and Keryn and Rachael had great races and were very happy with the way things went. After the race, I met Mike at the basketball clinic he runs on Saturdays and we headed up to Lake Placid for our annual training weekend. This year Neil and Tucker Withington and Charles Williams were joining us. Lake Placid is a 6-hour drive from Duxbury, but it's a pretty straight shot, and because Lake Placid is home to 10 year's worth of happy memories, I never mind the drive.

We got into town at about 6pm and checked in to the Golden Arrow. I can never get into the Golden Arrow during the Ironman because it's always sold out well in advance, but we always stay there during our training weekends. The hotel is one of the "greenest" places I've ever stayed. One of their roofs is covered with plants, and the beach is made of crushed limestone, which protects the pH of Mirror Lake.

We had an early dinner with Neil and Tucker and left a message for Charles and then headed off to bed. Neil, Charles and Mike were doing a half marathon in the morning and we wanted to get to bed early.

The Lake Placid Marathon and Half Marathon started at 8 am in front of the Olympic Oval so the 5 of us met in the lobby and walked down the street at 7:30 am. WAAAY more low key than the Boston Marathon! Tucker and I were on our bikes as we planned to bike around the course while Neil, Charles and Mike were racing.

The marathon and half marathon course is essentially the same course that the Ironman marathon is run on, which means there is only one hill, but it's about 3 miles long! The race starts with a slight uphill and then around Mirror Lake and proceeds downhill for about 3 miles and then flat, flat, flat until mile 10. It's such a pretty town and there are views of Whiteface Mountain and the Olympic ski jump along the way. The final 3 miles are uphill into town and then up the



back way to the oval (the same way you go down on your bike out of T1).

While the runners were running, Tucker and I scooted around the course on our bikes and got some good hill work in. I am an expert at zipping around this course from years of practice, so we got to see our people at the beginning, half-way through the race and at the end. I actually saw Mike at mile 10 as well as I was able to get around quicker than I thought. The weather was absolutely perfect for running and was just starting to get warm at 10 am, and by then everyone from our group was done. Everyone did great and Mike got a real chance to preview the course he will run in July. Charles has done Lake Placid a couple of times, so he's an old hand at the course.



After the race we went to Charlie's for a huge breakfast and then a little relaxation before meeting on the beach to swim in Mirror Lake. By this point in the day it had really started to get warm (upper 70's?) and we knew it was pouring back home, so we were really getting cocky and taking pictures of the brilliant sunshine and thinking we were the luckiest people in the world to be swimming in Mirror Lake. For those of you who haven't had the pleasure, the lake is usually smooth as glass and it's only open to swimming and non-motorized boats. There is a cable that runs the length of the rectangular Ironman swim course (2-loop course) so you

virtually never have to sight. Tucker got in the kayak, and the rest of us got into our wetsuits to swim. We all went off in different directions. I decided not to follow the cable and to just shoot off in random directions, since I always swim following the course. After about 20 minutes of swimming fairly close to shore, I decided to swim the course in backwards direction hoping to bump into one of my training partners. As it gets closer and closer to Ironman, more and more people will be swimming in the lake, but on this day there were only two other people besides us. I bumped into those two, but could only see the kayak at one end and Mike's arms at the other end of the lake. We had been swimming about 40 minutes when the sky got dark and the lake actually got a little choppy. It was fun swimming in the chop, but I was a little worried because I couldn't see where everyone was. Mike knows that "mother hen" side of me, so he swam quickly over from the other side of the pond, checked in, told me not to worry and took off again. I then saw the kayak and two sets of arms – Neil and Charles, so all was well. All in all we spent about an hour swimming in the Lake and really tired ourselves out, so by this time a nap was in order. Hey, no one said these training camps aren't grueling!

After a nice long nap, we met for an early dinner at The Carriage House. This is a place that we found along with Tim Walsh last year when we were up here training. They have a really nice outdoor patio with a view of the lake and patio heaters because it gets cold at night in LP. After dinner we walked back to the room and collapsed into bed after agreeing to meet for breakfast at 7:30 with plans to be on the bike course @ 9 am.

Morning rolled around and it breakfast and then out on the 112-mile course. The course of town, and then a really east on route 79 towards the driving into town we noticed was not good, and because we'd be in traffic, we had downhill very cautiously. Neil of us because they were us no matter what. Just as we



long descent, we noticed signs for road closures as they were working on the roads. Only one lane was closed however, so we decided to give it a try. Neil and I ended up getting stopped for what seemed like an eternity but was probably only 10 minutes as the line of traffic coming into town was allowed to pass. While we were waiting we talked to the flag man who told us that they were paving ALL of route 87 (yeah!) and would be done in time for Ironman. We also got to see two bald eagles soaring above us. When it was our turn to go, he let the line of cars go first and then Neil and I. So cool! We had the entire descent without one car as traffic was stopped in the other direction now, waiting for us! On our way down we saw wild turkeys slowly making their way across, and two white tailed deer quickly making their way across. It's so hard to describe how beautiful that ride is. We met the guys at the bottom of the hill and took off towards Jay. This is a very flat section of the course and even though this time we had a head wind here, it's usually quite fast. It was really getting warm as we started to climb out of Jay and towards Hazelton and the out-and-back. For some reason the ride really seemed to be going fast, and we made good time on the out and back too, which was good because at this point we were starting to notice darkening skies again.

We told the guys to head back to town and start their second loop and Neil and I were making plans to take a different route the second time around. Right at the bottom of the final ascent into town (the section know as The Bears) it started to sprinkle. By mid-way up The Bears it was raining pretty steadily and we saw cracks of lightening in the distance. Neil was starting to get a little cold although for some reason I was not cold in my cycling singlet. My only concern was that it was white – not a great choice in the pouring rain! Oh, well.



The rain got heavier and heavier as we continued to climb and now rivers were running down past us and my Oakley's were working overtime to stay clear. I was hoping that the guys hadn't made it into town yet and started the gnarly descent in this weather! My plan was to make it safely to the car and go out on the course and fetch them as it was not showing signs of letting up. When we got to the top and the final turn into town we saw the guys standing under the overhang of the roof of a log cabin! They were waiting to make sure we made it safely up the hill and they had wisely scrapped plans for a second loop. The rain was relentless as we made our way into town and we were riding through nearly pedal deep water if we stayed to the right. We rode as fast as we could back to the hotel and our cars, and got off the bikes just in time for the HAIL to start pounding us.

We all sat in our cars with the heat on high, trying to dry off and warm up. When we were dry enough to get out of the wet stuff, we changed clothes, waved good-bye from the safety of our cars and headed

out of town. As much as I love that place, the weather can be crazy and unpredictable! Let's hope that the unseasonably cool spring gives way to a blazing hot summer and we have nothing but blue sky the next time we are in Lake Placid!



The drive home