

Ironman USA

July 27, 2007

Lake Placid New York,

July 22, 2007

"I'm surprised that I'm not more nervous", I thought to myself as I lay in bed 12 hours before the gun would sound to start 2200+ of us on an adventure of a lifetime.

730 days of training and it all comes down to one day. Seventeen hours to finish, or be disqualified.

Lynne, Jordan and I had driven to Lake Placid on Wednesday before the race. Lynne had searched online for days, six months previously, trying to find us a place to stay. Accommodations rent out a year in advance for a place to stay within 50 miles of town for this event. She found us a great condo about 3k out of town, on the shore of Lake Placid, with a spectacular view of the lake and the mountains surrounding it. It was a huge room, with way too much of that Adirondack "We can make anything out of tree branches and birch bark" furniture.

The rain had pounded down on us all day Thursday and most of Friday. The weather report read that race day was going to be spectacular, but it sure didn't seem that way as the grounds around our condo slowly flooded. The creek that ran along the side of our condo looked like it was ready to overflow its banks. There were two small waterfalls in the creek as well. I'm sure the sound of the water crashing onto the rocks had something to do with how often we woke up in the night and headed to the bathroom!

The phone in our room rang about 7:15. It was Henri and George from Newmarket calling, very excitedly, wishing me the best for the day to come when the sun comes up. It was amazing to me, from the beginning of this adventure two years ago, how supportive and excited other triathletes were toward newbies like me. I received close to three dozen emails from well wishers, triathletes and friends in the last week before the race.

I fell asleep quickly after the call, and slept until about midnight. I lay in bed thinking to myself how lucky I was that I wasn't all nervous and I was getting a good night sleep. I kept thinking this over and over until about 3:30 in the morning. I guess I was more nervous than I thought!

I got out of bed and quickly updated my web site for the last time before the race. I got out the race plan that Adam, my coach, had me create a week or two earlier. I eat, wore and packed exactly what we'd planned, and left for the venue by about 4:15.

I was surprised to see how many people walked from the far side of town. Did they just not think about the fact that they'd have to walk back all that way after the race, or were they just in great shape and figured it wouldn't be any big deal? I wanted to park our car right beside the transition tent if I could!

The body marker folks were in the middle of the street in front of the transition area. They wrote my bib number on both arms and both legs, and then my age on the back of my calf. Both arms and both legs? Did they think I was going to explode and they'd have to match the parts later? What the heck had I gotten myself into? "First Light" was staring to appear. The sky looked clear. It was going to be a nice weather day.

Lynne, Jordan and I then walked up to the Special Needs Bag area to drop off the two bags that hopefully contained anything and everything that I would want or need, half way through each event. We found Michelle (my Iron Daughter) Gavin, (her Iron Husband) Derek, (Gavin's Brother) Kathryn (Derek's wife) and William (everyone's Iron buddy) walking along around the same area. We were all pretty nervous. No one seemed like they did the day before. I gave Michelle a big huge and we cried like idiots on the side of the road. I didn't know at the time that she had a really upset stomach and had been sick and crying for the last couple of hours already. They went back to the transition area to get changed. I already had my tri shorts on under my jeans so Lynne, Jordan and I headed over to the washrooms at the side of the lake and I put my wetsuit on there.

As I'm fighting with what feels like a super thick, full body condom, Adam Johnston, my coach from The Endurance Lab (www.theendurancelab.ca) came walking calmly along the sidewalk in front of me. I was great that he was there. There were a large number of Elab and NYAC athletes, as well as Tereza Macel, one of his Pro athletes competing in this event.

I felt somewhat reassured as he helped me get that wet suit on properly. There's nothing like someone who knows what he's doing giving me a hand. Usually I find I'm a quarter of the way into the swim and find that the suit is binding somewhere or pulling somewhere and it's too late and too hard to try and adjust it myself.

Christine (my younger daughter), and Evan met us there as well. Shortly there after, Wilf and Pam met up with us, and then Joni and John also. They had all driven down for the day to check this all out, keep Lynne and Jordan company, and to root me on. I'd watched Michelle three years earlier run this race, and then the next year we watched Gavin. I knew how exciting an event this was to watch. It was amazing to me that they all came down. Joni and John were on a vacationing tour and added Lake Placid to their trip for a few days stay.

We were talking excitedly amongst ourselves. At one point, Lynne leaned into me and said, "I'll bet your Dad is looking down at you and smiling". That's all it took for the tears to start flowing from my head! I do tend to get a bit emotional from time to time, and I didn't want to cry away all that water I'd been hydrating myself with for the last couple of days, so I hugged everyone and said goodbye and headed over to get into the water.

The Swim

I went out for a bit of a warm up swim for a couple of minutes. The air temperature was about 50 degrees, but the water was 72. I came out of the water after this little swim to see who I could find that I knew, but I couldn't find anyone. I got really cold very quickly. Back into the water I went, bobbing around in 5 feet of water, staying warm, but trying to find anyone. 2200+ competitors were getting into the water at the same time, so it's no wonder I couldn't see any of the dozen and a half people I knew who were participating in the race.

Eventually, I found Michelle, Gavin, Derek and Kathryn. We talked nervously for a bit, adjusted our goggles etc and waited for the 7:00 am gun to go off. I'd planned to wait about 3 minutes after the start of the race before I started to swim. I didn't want to be in the middle of all those folks crashing into each other in the water. I figured I was in for an extremely long day, and a couple of minutes of a late start trade off for an easy swim was a good compromise.

The swim consisted of swimming down a line (there actually is a line 3 feet below the water) of buoys from one end of Mirror Lake to almost the other end. A small, maybe 100 meter, leg to the left and then back again made up half the distance. At the beach we had to run out of the water, run over the timing mats and get back into the water again and swim the same loop over again. Every part of the Lake Placid Ironman course consisted of two loops of the course.

The gun finally sounded and we were off. I was about 2/3 of the way back in the crowd, directly on the line. I assumed I was far enough back to not get smashed around much, so I started swimming right away. I think it took me about 30 seconds or so to get to the start line. When I got to there, I spotted the first scuba diver below us. There are a number of scuba divers swimming along the entire course. It's not unusual for someone to get knocked out accidentally by a fist or a kick from someone beside or in front of them. The divers are there to bring anyone sinking back up again. I think that sounds more frightening than it felt. Somehow, I felt more secure knowing they were there!

My idea of being part way back and therefore safe from getting smashed was absolutely wrong. I was getting kicked in the head and shoulders. I had people swim up my back and actually pull themselves forward by pulling me back. The thing that bothered me the most was the number of folks with long finger nails that kept scratching the bottoms of my otherwise, very tender feet!

In many of the 8 triathlons that I've done over the last two years, I'd get out on the swim, feel tired or panicked, and I would stop, let my feet sink straight down and take a couple or three long slow breaths to compose myself, and then start off again. I tried this at one point early on, but got swam over immediately by folks behind me. There was not going to be any resting in this swim!

I must have been a quarter of the way down the first leg of the course before I was able to find a spot that I could swim comfortably in, but that didn't last long. I wasn't the only one who thought swimming down the line was a good idea. I guess everyone else has the same

problem swimming in a straight line also! When I got to the far end of the first leg, the crowding around the corner was incredible. I saw three scuba divers at the first corner. It was a huge 'free for all' fight trying to get around. I found swimming under that marker was the safest way to turn. Another huge mess of people at the next corner and we were off for the swim back to the beach.

I was pretty lucky on this leg. I got clear space for most of it and just kept swimming along, nice and easy, trying to keep count. Michelle had taught me that counting from one end of a leg to the other was a good way to know roughly where I was in relation to the length of the leg. I often lost count when I was training, but it seemed to me that I took about 1100 strokes from one end to the other. I never was able to count during this swim. We had practiced a fair amount of 'heads up' swimming at NYAC. I was reasonably comfortable with looking up to see where we were. I passed a number of folks, but every time I thought I was doing really well, three or four other folks would pass me like I was standing still! I'd laugh to myself when that happened. It felt like the hand of God, reaching down, giving me a little slap to let me know "You're not so hot!"

I couldn't believe my luck when I finished the first lap and went running to the timing mats at the beginning of the next lap. The clock showed 39 minutes and some seconds. The fastest time I ever had on the whole course in training was 1:22. I expected that, because of all the people I'd be crashing into, I'd take around 1:25 to 1:35 to finish the complete swim. I guessed I'd be 45 minutes for the first loop. I was ecstatic!

I headed around the dock and back into the water. The second loop was easier than the first. The crowd had stretched out a lot along the course now. A few times I thought of one of my swimming buddies Doug. Doug is a big man who swam in the same lane as I did at NYAC. Doug had done an Ironman before, but swimming wasn't his fastest sport of the three. You always knew if Doug is going past you in the pool! Those big arms crashing around stir things up pretty well! A few times along this loop someone was crashing around me. I could feel the wake, and the odd accidental punch or slap made me realize that, this is a big guy and I better get the heck away from him! (*Was that you Doug?*) It's odd that I was thinking of Doug in the water, we ended up running a few miles together later, (much later), in the day!

I got caught a few times with someone straight ahead of me, and other folks just off to either side. The thrashing from all of them created a beautiful bed of bubbles for me to swim over. I couldn't see anything through the water, but the extra buoyancy was a huge help for me to slip quickly through the water. It felt like no time before the divers appeared just before the beach at the far end of the swim again.

I ran out of the water, looking to see if I could find any of my family or friends. I pulled the zipper down the back of my wet suite and headed over to the peelers. Peelers are these amazing volunteers (just some of the 3500 of them that helped us that day) who help you out of your wetsuit. The 'Peeler' idea is that you peel the wetsuit down to your waist, (something like peeling an onion), run up to an available volunteer, toss yourself down on the ground on your back and lift up your legs. The volunteer grabs the wetsuit from around

your waist and pulls it off in one swift, tough tug. The wetsuit flies off like an overstretched elastic band. Anyone standing nearby, particularly behind them, gets soaked as the water rockets off the legs of suit.

I ran along the transition path towards the street along the to the transition area. People were screaming and cheering. One group turned out to be Bernadette, Simon, Sid, Steve and Steve, the team of triathletes from the Newmarket area that I've swam with, biked with or watched the year before at Ironman Wisconsin. I should say "Tried" to swim bike or run with. This is one fast group of super athletes! I saw Vicki on the hill on the other side of the fence. She was way off from everyone else. I couldn't believe that I had seen her that far off. Vicki is my training buddy. Vicki and I train at just about exactly the same speed in everything we do.

I'm lucky as heck to have found her to train with.

Triathletes do most of their training alone. The time commitment to run an Ironman race is immense. Time management is as important as any of the three sport disciplines. Training with folks that are faster than I am, was hard on me from a psychological standpoint. There was nothing more depressing than spending a few hours trying to keep up, but not being able to. There was never anyone who seemed annoyed that I couldn't keep up. In actual fact, EVERYONE was supportive and helpful beyond what I would ever imagine. The problem for me was my age old "Am I good enough" question.

Lynne and I have often talked about what we consider to be a major driving force for us, and that is; "Am I good enough" for this that or anything else? Spending a few hours not being able to catch anyone always left me with that "I'm NOT good enough" feeling. Not the thought you want in your head if you're doing something like an Ironman or anything else come to think of it!

Vicki and I live near each other, swim with the same team, and workout at the same gym. Vicki and I have a good few hundred kilometers of sub zero running behind us!

I raced around the corner towards T1 and found Lynne, Jordan and the gang. I stopped to kiss my sweetie and hug my son and say hi to everyone else quickly before heading off to the transition area.

I'd finished the first leg first leg of the day in 1:21.

3.8k down and only 222 k to go!

T1

I grabbed my "Swim to Bike" transition bag from the rack of 2000+ other bags hanging in racks in front of the transition tent and ran inside to find a pretty full room of half naked guys getting changed. I found a seat, dumped out the bag and started going through what was there that I wanted to wear. I'd put a couple of choices of shirts in the bag, but picked my "Running Free" shirt. Running Free (www.RunningFree.com) sponsored 67 athletes this year and I was lucky enough to be one of them. It was very cool to be part of another team. John, Sue, Andy and the rest of the rest gang at the store were a big help to me getting ready for the race. They know their stuff, and don't push anything on anyone. It's a great store with good prices and a HUGE variety of clothes and supplies.

This was the first triathlon where people took the time to dry off, change into dry clothes, and take a wee breath before heading out for the bike. Someone helped me get all my swim stuff together and into the bag and then took it for me to hang it up.

This group of volunteers was truly amazing. Helpful, cheerful and encouraging. 3500 of them helping 2200 of us. It was a huge help and truly appreciated by all!

I ended up taking 13 minutes in the transition area. I could have gone a little faster, but, I was tired from the swim and had 180 kilometer bike ride in front of me. I figured the time relaxing while slowly getting changed was good for me.

As I came out of the tent all geared up, someone called out my bid number and someone else was waiting for me with my bike in hand! These Ironman transitions are great!

The Bike

I ran with the bike up through the middle of the bike area and over to the start line. I jumped on the bike and headed down the hill with my gloves and arm warmers tucked in the back pockets of my shirt.

I got a little shock immediately. I'd found a small cut in my back tire the afternoon before when I racked my bike for the race, so I'd changed the tire the night before the race. My bike had been in the car when we brought it over, so the front wheel had been off also. I'd forgotten to twist the lever that spreads the brake pads apart when you remove a wheel. I'd cleaned the bike a few days earlier including the brake pads and the wheels. I'd noticed then how quickly and easily my brakes responded with almost no pull on the brake handles. The start line is at the top of a hill, with a sharp right turn at the bottom. I feathered the brakes as I started down the hill, but nothing happened with either one. I found if I jammed them on all the way, the brakes caught a little bit; enough to stop me from killing myself in the first 200 yards of the race anyway!

I stopped at the first opportunity and reached around to fix the back brakes. I'd been able to fix the front ones while I was riding.

I saw Shannon and Craig, Nancy and Jose' on my way out of town. I worked at putting on my gloves and arm warmers while I rode. I thought I would save time by putting them on while I was riding, but when I saw the number of folks who passed me, I thought that maybe this wasn't my smartest move!

We headed out of town, past the horse grounds, around the ski jumps and started the long slow climb towards the town of Keen. That first hill isn't as sharp as any of the roads we rode on west of Aurora along Keele and Jane or into Kettleby, but it's long. I'd ridden the course a few times before so I didn't bother me as much as it had the first time around. The temperature was rising slowly, but it was still a nice comfortable, albeit slow climb for a while. I knew what was coming. That 9k downhill into Keene makes all the pain of the day worthwhile. I've hit over 70 kph on that hill. I hit 69 on the first ride down it this day. There is a sharp left turn from Keen towards Upper Jay. The ride from Keen through Upper Jay and then on to Jay is relatively flat. There is a river that runs along the side of the road. Usually there are a number of fly fishermen in the river, and I've seen a huge Blue Crane in the water before. None were to be seen today. There were crowds in all the towns along the way. Some folks had pulled the bench seat out of their vans and sat on them at the side of the road cheering as we passed by. I was feeling pretty good. I'd met our friend William along the way. I said hi for a moment, but, he's a much faster guy than I. He pulled away and I don't think I saw him again until much later in the day.

Between Upper Jay and Jay, I was thrilled to see my buddy Christine. When I first met Christine, two years earlier, she was in charge of all the athletics at Timberlanes, the athletic club in Aurora that we belong to. She told me she was doing Lake Placid also and was unbelievably supportive of my quest. Christine taught the spinning class at the club. When I finally got my nerve up to try her class, I never looked back at spinning. My butt

was wishing I'd forget about it for a while, but the rest of me loved it! When I felt like I needed to find a triathlete coach, Christine was the first one to tell me about Adam Johnston. Christine and I car pool to North York twice a week for swimming class and talk each others ears off. I've loved those car rides. Although it's Vicki and I who have hundreds of kilometers of running together, it was Christine that ran with me and pushed me to my first, and only, under 1 hour 10k.

I can't remember if Christine was ahead of me and I caught up to her or visa versa, but we spent a fair amount of the rest of the first loop of the bike catching up to each other, passing for a bit, catching up and chatting again. She'd pulled ahead of me on the 'Out and Back' from Wilmington to the tiny town or Black Brook.

I fell half way up the 10k road on this first loop of the day. It was stupid of me, but I looked off in the woods at something for a moment, and rode off the road into the sand at the side. The sand was loose and deep. My front wheel sunk. The bike pretty much stopped dead and I fell over. I couldn't get my shoe unclipped fast enough. I thought of Robyn (my chiropractor) as my neck snapped and my head hit the ground. I was fine, slightly embarrassed more than anything. I looked over to hopefully see that there was no one around, but, I wasn't that lucky. About a dozen folks went by in a flash. Oh well, I was lucky in that the sand was soft!

I got back up and headed off again, being a little more careful to enjoy the fantastic scenery ahead of me, not off to the side!

The turn around after biking 10k up this road is in the middle of a tiny town that looks to be all of about 10 – 12 houses. Music was blaring from the PA system. I forget what old Rock song was playing the first time through. I remember thinking that 'Yes – John Cougar's, "Hurts So Good" seemed pretty fitting on the second time through! The entire town was out and had decorated the area as if it were Halloween. Huge spider webs, Gorilla suits and every kind of costume you could think of. It made for a great diversion while we slowed for that 180 degree turn around the marker and over the timing matt.

I grabbed a half a banana from the table on my way by. Again, the volunteers were great. Here in town, as well as every 10 miles or so along the bike course, the volunteers were at the side of the road holding out fresh water bottles, Gatorade bottles, protein bars and gels and bananas for us to grab as we rode by. I'd been chocking on bananas for the last couple of years in training and pretty much had decided that I'd never have another one as long as I lived, but them went down pretty well on the ride!

I was surprised to catch up to Christine again on the way back down to the loop. She'd made a pit stop along the way. We rode past my kids cottage together so I was able to point it out to her. She pulled away for the last time when we got back to Wilmington. I didn't see her again until near the end of the day.

The climb into town is painful. Again the hills coming into town have the sharpest inclines along the route. The last 6 miles into town raise up a little over 1000 feet. The five hills just

before town are named Little and Big Cherry, and then Momma Bear, Baby Bear and then Poppa Bear. You can imagine which is largest. I didn't think they really needed to 'save the best till last!'

Adam was waiting part way up Big Bear and ran along side of me for a minute. It was very tempting to hang onto him and let him push me up. I realized he was running, or jogging along beside me using much less effort than I was trying to peddle! Fabulous though for me to hear my coach telling me I was doing a good job of it!

The Special Needs Bag area is along the north shore of Mirror Lake as we ride into town. Someone called out my race number as I got near so that someone else had the bag, with my number showing and calling out my number as I rode up. He held the bag open as I took the four empty water bottles off of my bike and replaced them with the four that I had filled with E-Load. I grabbed another Peanut Butter and Jam on Raisin Bread sandwich, thanked him and headed off again. I'd eaten one sandwich and an 'Oatmeal To Go' bar and one Gu so far. I knew I should have eaten a bit more, but I was having a hard time chewing food and swallowing it along the way.

Riding into town was absolutely amazingly uplifting. I saw Lynne, Jordan, Christine and Evan, Daniela and Mike, Joni and John and Wilf and Pam along the way. I stopped for an instant to kiss my sweetie again, a quick "Hi" to all and I was off again to start the second loop. Half of the 180 K was out of the way. I'd managed to get that done in 3:29. I'd guessed I'd have been 3.5 hours.

The hills all seemed just a little bit higher and a little bit longer the second time through. I tried to eat as best I could. The wind, which to this point had been non existent, had picked up a little bit. The Sun was getting hotter. I drank a lot more water on this loop. Up and out of town, down that great Keene hill again. I only hit about 65k this time though. The wind slowed us down a bit.

The only other interesting thing I remember about this loop of the bike was the girl that threw up while she was riding down the road in front of me. It must have caught her by surprise because she was looking straight forward when it happened. I was just a few feet behind her. We were both doing about 30 kph at the time. I was happy that I had pulled over to pass her before all that stuff went flying past me!

I don't recall seeing anyone along the way for the second loop until I was coming back in from the 'Out and Back'. I saw Kathryn give me a small tired wave. She was heading out while I was heading back. A couple of minutes later I heard "Hey Dad" from Michelle as she blew by in the other direction also.

I was confused a bit. They were behind me. How the heck could that be? They are both so much stronger than I am. I had mixed emotions for a while. I figured I must be doing pretty well if I was in front of them, but I was wondering what was wrong for them that they were behind me. I thought about both sides of that coin for a bit, but decided to settle into the

excitement that I was ahead! God got me back shortly afterwards, but for the rest of the bike ride, I was pretty excited.

I stopped just past the gorge near the town of Elba. I knew the 1000 foot, 5 named hill climb was coming. My calves and my knees were killing me. I'd eaten 6 aspirin already along the ride, but I popped my last two. I stretched my legs a bit and let my heart rate slow right down. There was another fellow stopped at the same spot. He was explaining to one of the volunteers that he'd run out of salt tablets and his legs were cramping up. I had some spares so I gave them to him. He said thanks and asked if I needed anything. I thought that was nice of him, but when I asked for a ride into town, he balked!

The bottoms of my feet were unbelievably sore. I felt like the screws that hold the clips on had punched through the carbon bottom bike shoes and were cutting the bottoms of my feet. No such thing was actually happening, but they sure were sore. I tried as best I could to pull up rather than push down with my feet for a while, but that was pretty much impossible as I ground my way up the hills again.

No Adam at the top of the hill this time, but the diversion of looking for him helped pass away a bit more time! No stopping for Special Needs again, just ride right into town with 1000's of screaming cheering strangers along the sides of the road.

I found Lynne, Jordan, Christine and all again in the same spot they were in again. I stopped and expressed my feelings of tiredness "Am I ever friggin' tired", and then pushed off to loop around the back of the school and into the transition area again.

I laughed hysterically as I passed Mike and Daniela with the huge sign they'd made with the "What would Bob Say" letters on it. (Ask me about it. I'll tell you!)

Someone took my bike as I entered T2 (transition area 2) and I walked, or hobbled a bit between the sore hip, knees, ankles and feet along with the usual fun of trying to walk in biking shoes. A quick stop at a 'port-a-potty' and I grabbed my running supplies bag and headed into the transition tent again.

I took a half hour longer on the second loop from the first, but I was still pretty happy with my overall 7:28 total bike time. I had figured I'd be 7.5 to 8 hours for that segment of the race.

T2

T2 went faster than T1. It ended up taking me 10 minutes to get changed, packed up and out again. I had meant to put a bottle of E-Load into my transition bag so that I could 'fuel up', but as I searched through the bag I realized I'd lost or forgotten it somewhere. I asked one of the volunteers if I would pass somewhere that I'd be able to get a drink on the way out. He said sure, and then went out and got me a big glass of Gatorade and brought it back to me.

Those volunteers were great everywhere along the way. I tried to make a point of saying "Thanks" to every volunteer I met. Their standard answer was always, "No, thanks to you guys for being out here doing this". It was always a boost!

The Run

I heard the greatest comment of the day when I headed out from T2 to start the run. I saw Jordan and Lynne directly in front of me as I came out of the tent towards the run start line.

I said something to them about being screwed because I was so exhausted. Jordan looked at me and said "Don't worry about it Dad, you've got 8 hours".

It was a breath of fresh air for me. I had a watch on. I knew what time it was, but I was too tired to figure out what the difference from the current time to the 12:00 cut off time was. Everyone told me that the 42 k run could be walked in 6 hours. I had 8. I was going to make it. It felt like a miracle!

I ran past Simon, Sid, Bernadette, Steve and Steve and heard them cheering for me. I heard lots of people cheering for me. The bids had our names on them as well as our bib number. People on the routes cheered for whoever's names they could read as we went by, but it was so special and uplifting to see friends along the way. I knew that they knew what this really was about.

I headed out of town, around the horse park again and started on the leg past the ski jump when Michelle caught up to me. I had planned to run from table to table, 1 mile apart, and walk the tables eating and drinking as I went. The tables now had the usual water, Gatorade, gels, and power bars that were out on the bike course, but now they had cookies and grapes and pretzels and chicken broth, as well as, my personal favorite, Coca Cola.

Prior to taking on this crazy Ironman event, I drank 2 to 3 liters of Coke a day for many years. Everyone told me how bad it was for me, but, I'd been drinking that much Coke daily for 30 years or more, so I really didn't listen. I did pretty much give it up while training though. I was down to about 1 small bottle of Coke a week for most of the last year and a half or so. Now that I found it at every table along the way, I took that as an omen from God that it was OK to make up for lost time.

The warm chicken broth tasted great. Something warm in my stomach felt good. The mix of Coke and Chicken Broth was odd though ;-)

For the first few tables, (Bernadette told me to think of the run, not as 42 k, but as 26 feasts), I grabbed a cup of each and walked and drank at the same time. The net result was that I think I swallowed less than I poured down my chest. By about the third table I decided to just stop for 30 seconds and drink the whole cup!

I ran with Michelle for a short while, but I was too tired to keep up. A quick hug and a kiss and a "Good Luck" and I started walking and watched her pull ahead and out of sight. This part of the course was along a windy road through the woods. When I'd run the course previously in training, I thought this part of the course was pretty flat. Now, what used to seem like small inclines, seemed much steeper and longer!

I knew Michelle wasn't very far ahead when I saw her heading back towards me. That meant the turn around point wasn't too far ahead. My knees felt like they were going to

explode. As we passed, I asked Michelle to let Lynne know that I needed some aspirin from her when I see her in town again in an hour or so. I figured if Michelle told Lynne, and Lynne didn't have any, she'd have time to get me some. What I didn't know was that Michelle refused to walk at all during the run. There is a HUGE hill coming into town that I'm sure I couldn't run up if it was the only thing I did in a day. She was winded like crazy when she past Lynne and the request apparently came out more like a cry for medical attention. Lynne was scared for me until I got into town a while later. Luckily for me, she had the Aspirin for me. (Thanks Joni). Jordan passed it to me and I swallowed them down at the next food table. I saw all my friends again on my way through.

I made it to the Special Needs Bags and stopped for another package of Oatmeal-To-Go and some gel. I had a bottle of E-Load there as well. I drank that quickly. I couldn't find any more Aspirin. (I found two more packages in that bag after the race). The turn around for this short leg felt like it took forever to get to. It was actually only about a mile up the road, but it sure felt longer.

Back around and into town again. Past my family and friends and started out of town again. I saw Adam again at the top of that big hill in the center of town. Again he told me I was going great. I explained to him that I'd changed my running plan. Instead of running from table to table and walking past them, which should have worked out to about an 8 minute run and a 2 minute walk, I was running only if I were facing a downhill and only the if the downhill was in the shade! We laughed and I was on my way again.

A few meters later I saw Kevin MacDonald. Kevin is a Timberlanes member too. He's done Ironman before, and planed to do this one, but, unfortunately, life got in the way and he couldn't do it. Kevin was another person who always went out of his way with encouragement for me while we were all training. Kevin ran beside me for about a quarter mile or so. Everyone tells you your doing great on the race course, but there's something really special and meaningful for another athlete to be telling you. Kevin gave me another much need boost along the way.

As I headed out again towards the horse grounds and I saw big Doug running ahead of me. It must have taken me a kilometer or more to catch him, but eventually I did. We ran along together for a few miles. I couldn't believe it but, at one point Doug told me how much pain he was in and that he didn't have any Aspirin. For some reason, at that point, I remembered that I had a package of Motrin in the back pocket of my shirt. I couldn't remember they were there when I needed them, but I could when someone else needed them! I guess my brain was a little tired too. I gave Doug the pills and we ran on talking for a while more. My legs were starting to cramp up so I told Doug to go ahead and I would walk for a while. Doug had some salt pills with him and he gave me a couple. We walked and ran for a little while longer, but I couldn't keep up. We said goodbye and again I watched as he moved ahead.

Somewhere along the way I saw Jimmy and Chris from the pool. They were doing great and were way ahead of where I was. It was fabulous to see them both doing so well.

I saw Paul and Pat along the way. I couldn't figure out why Pat hadn't said hi to me when he passed me on the bike. In every race we've done together, I've come out of the water quicker than Pat, but he catches me quickly on the bike. He always pulls up beside me. Say's HI, asks how I'm doing and then move out. That didn't happen on this ride. It ended up that Pat had three flat tires on the ride and never did catch me until the run.

Paul was another story. Paul just breezes past me at everything so I was surprised to see him coming up from behind me. It ended up that Pat got sick at the start of the run. He ran over to the side of the road, sat down under a tree and had a little 30 minute nap! A cop woke him up when he checked on him. Paul thanked him, got up, and finished the race!

Paul and Pat asked me if I wanted to run with them, but I couldn't. I know that if I continue with this sport, I'm going to have to learn to pace myself better and eat better on the bike.

I saw Michelle coming along from the long leg out and back. We waved these silly 'arms out from our sides only' (because we can't lift them over our heads) waves. When we met, I went to give her a hug, but she just said "I can't stop" and carried on. I was amazed that she was still running when she was obviously not feeling well.

Around the time I got to the long leg turn around point, I met up with Terry Moore from Halifax. I didn't know Terry at the time, but he was walking at about the same pace I was. We started talking and walking together. Every once in a while Terry, who's wife has done many of these things, but was doing his own first Ironman also, would say, OK – Let's run to the next street light. I would curse at him, but join him. I couldn't believe how much my legs hurt, my hip was out and, I guess from holding onto the bike handlebars too tight or something, my elbows were throbbing too.

As we got to a slight downhill part of the route into town, the sun had gone down, and someone at the side of the road yelled to us that we were on a hill and we should take advantage of gravity and run down this slope. We explained that the slope wasn't large enough – We only run on big slopes!

Into town again, around that corner where the guys with the megaphone yelled to everyone. (They are there every year!) Back past family and friends. Adam was at the top of the hill and ran walked with me for a bit. I introduced Terry and then explained to Adam that: I think we got the swimming down pretty well (I couldn't swim when I started with him) and the biking seemed to be going pretty well, but I didn't think this running thing was working too well and I thought I might be needing a bit of a discount from my running fees over the last year and a half! We laughed and I carried on.

On to my family and friends to find a new body in the mix. My buddy from St.Catharines, George, had come out. He'd been vacationing with his family in Picton. His wife Patty headed home with the kids Sunday morning and George headed to Lake Placid. He didn't make it to town until about 9:00 PM. I saw him at the side of the road with Mike and Daniela and stopped to say Hi. We leaned over the fence for a big hug and a slap on the back.

George is either a lot stronger than I remember, or I was a lot weaker than usual. The slap on my back felt like it would break my spine! It was OK though. I couldn't believe my old buddy went to all that bother to come and see the last 30 minutes of the race, and then head back to St Catharines for work the next morning!

I turned the corner for the last little out and back leg of the race. People were cheering like crazy, although the crowds were thinning out. The early finishers were done around 4:00 PM. It was pushing 9:30 now. I could see Terry up ahead and caught up to him almost at the turn around. Pat and Paul had come down past me towards the finish line as had Doug.

Terry and I walked and talked and ran a bit. We were trying to figure out at what point we could start to run and keep running into the track and around to the finishing chute. We were practically at the point from where we came out of the water after the swim (which seemed like it was a week ago) before we started running.

I saw my buddy Christine as I came down the street. She's running Ironman in Penticton in a couple of weeks so the swim and the bike here were just training for her. It was too close to her real race to do the run.

I saw Adam as I came into the track and started around the end. Simon, Bernadette, Sid, Steve and Steve were screaming to me from the inside of the track. I ran over then and did a high 5 with them as I ran by. A few steps later and it was there.

The finish line . . . Bleachers along the sides . . . Lights . . . The time clock . . . The announcer.

It's magic – absolute magic! It felt unreal. 2 years of training covering over 7500 kilometers. Running in the ice and snow, the Wisconsin gang yelling to me in the water in my first Tri-A-Tri, a thousand training moments came to mind in a flash.

I was picking up speed with maybe 200 meters to go. I saw that I was going to catch up to a crowd of people all crossing the line at the same time. I slowed down. I selfishly wasn't going to share that "Finisher" picture with anyone!

Finally, crossing the finish line. The announcer screams "Greg Collett, You are an Ironman".

I'd imagined that many times over the last 2 years. Words can't describe the feeling. My mind was numb, my body hurt, everywhere, but I was bursting with pride and happy beyond belief.

Lynne, Jordan, Christine and our friends were all right at the line waiting for me. I got to them before I got my medal or anything. It was a feeling I'll never forget.

Greg Collett – Ironman

Track an Athlete: Lake Placid 2007

NAME GREG COLLETT
BIB NUMBER 1908
AGE 57
PROFESSION
STATE/COUNTRY AURORA ON CAN

SWIM	BIKE	RUN	OVERALL	POSITION
1:21:08	7:28:21	5:54:00	15:07:26	1790

RACE LEG	DISTANCE	PACE	POSITION
TOTAL SWIM	2.4 mi. (1:21:08)	2:08/100m	1522
FIRST BIKE SEGMENT	56 mi. (3:29:15)	16.06 mph	
FINAL BIKE SEGMENT	56 mi. (3:59:06)	14.05 mph	
TOTAL BIKE	112 mi. (7:28:21)	14.99 mph	1784
FIRST RUN SEGMENT	13.1 mi. (2:50:03)	12:58/mile	
FINAL RUN SEGMENT	13.1 mi. (3:03:57)	14:02/mile	
TOTAL RUN	26.2 mi. (5:54:00)	13:30/mile	1790

TRANSITION	TIME
T1: SWIM-TO-BIKE	13:15
T2: BIKE-TO-RUN	10:42

PENALTY	TIME
TOTAL PENALTIES	--:--

TOTAL PENALTIES	TIME
PENALTY	TIME
T2: BIKE-TO-RUN	10:42
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