

## IRONMAN BRAZIL 2007 RACE REPORT

As I was training for this event, I swore I would never do an early season Ironman again. The indoor bike training was torturous, and then only being able to get 6 solid weeks of outdoor bike training was crazy. However, if I have an overall experience as I did traveling with Ken Glah and his Endurance Sports Travel (EST) group, I will do it again and again.

*Tuesday/Wednesday May 22/23, 2007*

Travel days. Left Madison airport at 11:30am, to Chicago, to Miami, overnight flight to Sau Palo, Brazil, then an hour jet down to Florianopolis. Arrived at the host hotel for the race at around noon that Wednesday. Smelly and hungry! And, oh, ALL MY BAGGAGE AND BIKE MADE IT! (knock on wood for next time.)

As I was in the Florianopolis airport, I picked up two people whom I ended up spending most of my time with, April and Frank. These two are a hoot! They are from North Carolina (go Duke!) and were on their way to finish their first IM.

As I was in Miami on a 5 hour layover, I decided to mingle some. While sipping some coffee, I met Adrian and Dan from PA. They were on their way down to do their first IM. A little later as I was waiting in line to get my seat assignment, I met Chris who lives up by Orlando. He had been hosting Nina Kraft for six weeks so she could get ready for IM Brazil. Thus, I got to meet her and chat some. It was great to run into her here and there during the race week.

That day I got checked in, and ate at a fabulous little restaurant. The restaurants down there are primarily buffet style. Fill a plate, as many times as you want, and pay at the end. The food down there is phenomenal. It's amazing when you go to a country and their food supply and way of eating has not been hit with the food additives and processed foods we get here. The fruit actually tasted like fruit, and the homemade food was amazing. And you could chow down for \$4 a full plate!

Later that day I put my bike together. It wasn't too banged up in the great bike case I got! Thanks Dino! The great thing when you travel with EST is that they have bike mechanics at your hotel site and can use them at your disposal. I dropped my bike off for some simple adjustments to the shifting system. A few hours later I had it back!

That night was the first hit of the buffet. When you travel with EST, you have full breakfast and dinner buffet included in your travel expenses with them. That was some of the best buffet eating I ever had! And it was every night!

*Thursday May 24, 2007*

Decent nights sleep got me up around 7am. The sun sets early because it's Brazil's fall at this time. The sun set at around 5:30/6pm and the sun is up around 6:30/7am. I hit the buffet breakfast – just as awesome as the dinner buffet!

After breakfast, I headed down with April, Frank and another girl we picked up, Jennifer, to pick up our race packets. The expo/race start was 2k away from the host hotel we stayed at. We took this awesome walkway along the beach to the expo. The process is a little different down there. However they were very organized. We picked up 6 race bags, and checked in our chips. There were only 1200 racing, so there was virtually no line.

EST has shuttles every 15 minutes for anyone to jump back and forth from the expo/hotel/shopping area, etc. We jumped on the next shuttle back.

After dropping off our race packets, we jumped the shuttle again to get our first open water ocean swim in. It's not everyday that I can say that around here! The water was great! Calm, warm, and of course salty! Boy, did I have a great wetsuit burn on my neck, which I still have! Bodyglide sort of works here, but with the salt/sand in the water, it is inevitable to get a burn on the neck. I saw every athlete on Monday post-race with some sort of battle wound.

After the swim, we decided to get the bikes out on the road. The day was amazing. Not a cloud in the sky. Got an 1.5 hr ride in to get the kinks out of the bikes and make sure they were riding well.

The atmosphere around the hotel and down the main drag to the race expo/start/finish was amazing. The community was quiet and very nice. All you could see around was all these athletes there for one goal. They were all swimming in the ocean, biking around the neighborhoods and running up and down the streets/sidewalks. It was almost like the neighborhood knew we were coming and let us use

their area for our goal of completing the Ironman. We kind of took over the area, but it was calm, relaxing, but had energy.

Later that day at 4pm we had the English race meeting. The general things were said. Nothing new except a 2 hr 30 min duration to complete the swim.

That night was another buffet gluttony.

At about 9:30pm, I was comfortably settled in my bed when my door knocked. When I answered it, I had a big basket of flowers and goodies staring right at me. My wonderful friends from back home had organized with Abby from EST to put together a gift basket and card for me to wish me good luck (Thanks Laura, Doug, Pete, Laura, Ned, Roy, Ryan, Matt A, Jessica, Becca, Mo, Jodi, Al, and Sharon!)

Rested well that night.

*Friday May 25, 2007*

Before breakfast, I decided to go for a run. The ocean was calm and weather cool. The nights brought 50's and the daytime brought high 60's/low 70's. The shad was chilly even then. I hit up breakfast that morning as usual, followed up with a small ocean swim.

For lunch, a few of us decided to head up out of town some to the other area hotels with fellow EST athletes. We took the shuttle about 2k. The neighborhood was very quiet, and the food fabulous at the restaurant we ate at.

On the way back, we picked up my friend Chris from Florida. When we got dropped off, I head with him to get him checked in to a condo hotel that he was sharing with some fellow athlete friends of Nina Kraft. We then headed up to the local shopping area to check things out and blow some time.

That night was the athlete pasta dinner. Set-up was a little different then here for IMWI. Imagine about 2000 people sitting, waiting, all hungry. All of a sudden, the announcer tells everyone to go eat. These mass herds of people fight and kick for food. It was crazy!!! We got a big table together with others we had met along the way – April, Frank, Jennifer and her family, Dan, and Adrian. The food was great, but called it an early night. I wanted to lay out all my race bags for that Sunday.

*Saturday May 26, 2007*

Day before race. Got up for my normal buffet breakfast and followed it up with a light bike ride and run. When I returned, I double checked my bags and packed them up.

To get to the race to drop off bikes, etc. we very carefully rode our bikes down 2k with our gear bags strapped to our backs. Was that interesting!

After we dropped off our gear, we ran into some guys from Spain. April and Frank had met them the day before at breakfast at the hotel. Not knowing then, but one of them was going to be the 10<sup>th</sup> overall finisher on Sunday!

That rest of the afternoon, April, Frank and I just lay out on the beach and soaked some sun. It was weird; we were lying out on the beach. One minute I was complete relaxed, and then the next minute I was thinking, wait! I have to race tomorrow!

That night dinner was served earlier so we could get into bed sooner. Nighty night happened at 8pm.

*Sunday May 27, 2007*

### *RACE DAY*

Up until I got to Brazil, I never really visualized too much about the race. I did not know the terrain, scenery, etc. and decided to not make all these visual plans, and then have to redo them once I got to Brazil. I had two Ironman's under my belt, so I know the distance and how to handle it, I just had to execute it in an unfamiliar territory.

That morning I got up to eat at 4:45am. I got down to the race start to get ready by 5:30. Everything there was pretty close together and less congested compared to IMWI. After I checked my bags and bike, I walked around listening to my iPod getting ready to race.

The race beginning was not that full of energy and climax as I would typically get here with IMWI. There were maybe 1000 people at the race start. Much less then the race-start here. I ran into my new Spaniard friends and we headed down to the swim start together.

I typically get very excited and energized at the swim start. I really didn't feel much here. I knew what was ahead, however I am usually with my friends to start such an endeavor. I was with friends at Brazil, however only a few days old, and a quick tight bond and friendship.

Weather that morning? Overcast. 55 degrees. Perfect. Thus not having to sight into the sun. That was great!

### *Swim*

At 7am the gun went off. The race had fireworks at the beginning which was exciting. It was a mass start from the beach. Once I hit open water, I really didn't have to mess with any people kicking/punching/grabbing etc. after about 50 yards. Smooth sailing I thought!

Got to the first buoy and started to head in feeling my time was pretty good. The swim at Brazil was an out, over and back into shore to run 30m on land then head back out to do the second half of the swim. About 200 yards coming into shore for the run-about, I started running into people who were heading back out. I felt like I was sighting fairly well, but still had a traffic jam. This definitely was slowing me down. Once I finally got to shore, there was a jam of people coming into the running shoot that was about 10 yards wide. I ran the 30m and started into the water again. To the start running into people who had off-sighted the entrance to the run-about on shore. I had to hassle with about another 200 yards of swimming and dodging people. Instead of dodgeball, it was dodgepeople! This situation started to slow my time down for sure! This second out/over and back in of the swim was different. You could hear and feel the helicopters above. There were two of them. The helicopters made the water bounce up and down. It felt like it took forever to get to the second out buoy. I hit the buoy, made hard 200 yard swim adjacent to shore, and thought home sweet home, I'm in! Well, never mind that thought! Some crazy current had made its way in and no one was swimming a straight line. The kayakers tried to keep us moving in, but every other sighting effort I made I was always listing to the right. Spectators from shore said that instead of a straight line in of swimmers, there was a huge arc. Anywho, my swim time was not what I predicted: 1:30. Yuk!

### *Bike*

Weather on the bike – overcast and 65 degrees. When I biked down to the south end of the island, I ran into some rain which was refreshing! It stayed this way until about the last 30 minutes of my bike, in which the sun came out.

Transition went well. Got out on the bike! Finally! After mentally telling myself to get over the swim, I was good to go. The bike is very flat, except for about a 10 mile stretch where it has 3 decent long climbs, which definitely killed the average speed. The bike had 2 loops and 3-4 turnarounds. Imagine this, jumping onto the interstate, on-ramps and all, and biking for 6 hours. Yup. That was it. No spectators. Only aid stations. At the ½ way loop turnaround to get back out, there were a few hundred spectators, but that was it. It was a very lonely course!

Even though the spectators were low, the scenery was fabulous! Look to your left and see the mountains. Look to your right and see the ocean. Taking in deep breaths and looking at the scenery really gave me new insight on what it should be like to race. A lot of times we get caught up in the time, pace, who's ahead, who's behind. We forget about the scenery, and being supportive of who's around you. At any race, I try to encourage those who I pass, and give props to those who pass me. In the end, it's just a race. It's not the end. It's a small stop on a long journey of friendship, health and longevity.

For the first hour of the bike I was belching and acid refluxing my Perpetuum. I also had a decent sized cramp in my right side. Not sure if it was the Perpetuum or what. Anyway, that is definitely out for the rest of this years training! I trained with it since January, but of course, it wasn't there for me race day. Ended up just doing water, Gatorade and gels. When I hit my ½ way bag, I grabbed my Snickers bar. Thank heavens! I started in-taking a bite every 30 minutes. Perfect I tell ya!

Aero position in a tri bike for 6 hours is no fun I found out. I trained as much as I could in aero position, but in the end, it still got me. My neck was tight and every muscle in my upper body was sore by the time I got to the run. Crazy!

The bike average was a little slower then expected. The long flats really do get to you. Hour after hour. Every few minutes for the last 25 miles I got up out of the seat to do 10 power strokes just to change position and keep the legs loose. Goal time for me was to be 6:10, finished in 6:33. Not too bad, 20 minutes. (Race results posted 6:47

but that included T1, something which was annoying to me when I saw the results...oh well!)

## *Run*

Weather – it felt like it was starting to cool down. The sun sets at 5:30-6:00pm at this time of year. It's fall down in Brazil. I knew I was going to have to put on my jacket sometime during the run. The sun was shining though, so that was uplifting and great to feel!

Running! I couldn't wait to run! I think we all think that at about mile 90 of the bike. You're just done with the bike! There were maybe a few hundred spectators lining the course for the first mile of the run. You hit your first turn for the run to go out of town, and NOTHING! No spectators. There are a lot of runners, but nothing else. Once again, it's you, other athletes, and aid stations.

The first ½ of the run is a large loop of 14 miles. There are 3 decent sized hills again, of which are the likes and steepness of the lovely hill on Timber Lane. It's literally a walk-up hill. No need in wasting energy. I got to see a few people on the run that I had met along the way. It was refreshing to see faces and get a quick bit of energy. If you do this race, make sure you take in the scenery. I had to keep reminding myself of that. You can see the ocean and the beautiful city. Sometimes you have to stop and smell the roses.

I will prop the aid stations in Brazil. They had cake!!!!!! Chocolate and white. Imagine a white pound cake. That was it! Every station I took a hit of water, cola and cake. That stuff works! Another first for me, was taking in a salt packet. Yes, those little salt packets you would get at the hotdog stand. I was taking in a salt packet every hour. It worked!!

The one "mean" thing with Ironman Brazil is you have to go right by the finish line three time! Two for doing loops, and the third to the finish. I was tempted a few times to just trot on in and finish. When you go through the turnaround, you get a colored bracelet to wear to distinguish what loop you are on. I came in from the first 14 miles, my time was slightly slower then I wanted. I wanted to come in at 2:20 for 14 miles, but hit 2:30. 10 minutes wasn't bad. It was 5:50pm and my goal was 8:00pm to finish. That meant I had to do the last 2 10k at a 10:00 pace. I felt I was strong and could keep that up. 1:05 for the first loop. Let's do it. As I was looping back out, I was going by the Endurance Sports Travel host house. They rent a

house right on the course. It's a place for athletes to congregate before and after the race, as well as significant others to have a place to go watch the race, etc. I got a great push from the people there. I had met some of the peeps there, so having people know you and cheer you on was great. That's why I do IM WI. The support is great! It's not that the race was not supportive, it's just very very far and few spectator cheering in between.

I headed out for the first of 2 loops of a 10k. The sun was just about to set. I could feel my legs starting to slow down. I was really trying to keep that at bay mentally. I'm not a runner by trade. Being it a very flat 10k course, I felt I could maintain a fast IM shuffle...if that makes sense! Water, coke, cake, oh my! My goal was to get that cake. Knocking down every aid station, I came in at 1:15 for the first of 2 10k loops. Alright, 10 minutes off. At that time I was trying to get my body to decide to pick up the pace or just go plan B – under 14 hours. EST host house, I'll get some cheers there. Well, when I passed there, there were 3 people sitting up on chairs on the porch. Everyone was gone. Boy did that flatten me out. I hit the first turn to go out on the loop. You can do this. Keep a steady pace. I started thinking about my legs. I felt my arms/pecs again. Jeez where they sore from the bike! Then my internal motivation started to fail. I was thinking, all I need is a familiar voice, a friend, something. I started to lose the internal motivation and concentration and started walking. I had a few tears of disappointment. After hours and hours of loneliness (as compared to IMWI and other races I've been in) it started getting to me.

This moment proved to me why I do what I do. I love the community, the friends, the motivation, the support and everything else. I'm not out there to win anything. I'm an age-grouper and love it. I have my personal bests and successes. I love what I do and what I preach. It's what moves me. That moment made everything clear. It's not winning, but being an athlete at your personal best.

Well, I got my wish. After about ½ mile of walking, here shuffles up Dan. Met him at the Miami airport and we'd run into each other a few times. He walked 1.5 miles with me and told me we have to run this thing in. I said alrighty! We had picked up Gabe from Chicago. Of all the people and all the 37 different countries represented, three of us Midwesterners ended up together to finish this Ironman. With 3 miles left Dan took off. Gabe and I took the last few miles in together. Step by step we got closer.

My Plan A was 13:00. Plan B 13:30. Well, plan C was in effect. 13:57. It is still 1.5 hour improvement over my last IM, so I can't complain! I got my 13:00, it just had :57 after it ;-)

We always have personal things that we want in a race and it doesn't always happen. Overall, I am very pleased with my race. We typically always point out the negative things that happened. I do it to myself. It's good to analyze what could have done better, but we must all pat ourselves on the back and give ourselves a self-high five for what we achieve in our races and training.

If you ever ask me why I do Ironman, one of my first responses is to feel the adrenaline and excitement I get on that last mile of the Ironman up to the finish. That's it. All the training. All that time. Just for 1 little mile. In Ironman Brazil, it was completely the opposite. I passed maybe 50-60 spectators on the last little stretch of the race. You could kind of hear the announcer and some music. I let Gabe take off some so he could get a solo finishers picture. As I came in, it was so anti-climatic. The bleachers were about half full. There was no ribbon crossing. No catchers to assist you. I finished, looked around and gave myself a high five. I walked over to get a medal and a blanket was given to me. I walked back by the food and saw Dan, and his friend Adrian who crushed the course earlier that day. We chatted and walked over to check in and show our medals to get a finishers shirt (and, oh, get this, they ran out of finishers shirts! I did get one, but I know a few who didn't. IM Brazil knows how many signed up, why not enough shirts? Weird.) However, they did have ice cream at the finish. Yum☺ We have to talk to IMWI about that one!

Us three went to go get our gear and head back to the EST host house a few blocks away. They had a huge buffet set up for people to eat. That was spectacular. I wanted to wait for my friends Frank and April. They were completing their first IM together. As I was watching, here they came. I hustled down to the finish. They came in just under 15 hours. As they finished, Frank got down on one knee (thinking he was collapsing) and proposed to April! I will say it was a fantastic finish for them both! Finishing one journey to start another. That was truly great to experience with them.

That night I went back to the hotel feeling pretty good with the exception of every muscle aching!

*Monday, May 28, 2007*

Monday was a great day. I ran into all my newly un-virgin Ironman friends, as well as friends who were adding another race to their list. We were all pretty happy with the previous day and were ready to relax. I did the breakfast thing and went to sit out at the beach. At noon, there was the typical awards banquet and food buffet. I ended up going with my Spaniard friends. One of them had a fabulous day. He placed 10<sup>th</sup> overall in the men's division. Awesome!

Later that day EST puts on a huge dinner banquet for anyone who travels with the group. It was a huge buffet dinner, as well as the best damn skewered grilled meat I've ever had! There were about 400 people at this restaurant. It was a fabulous time for all of us to mingle and go a little crazy, share stories and enjoy the last few days we had together.

Later that night we all took shuttle buses to a club. Ironman Brazil exclusively opens up a disco club/restaurant for all Ironman athletes. I've never been to Europe, but I've been told that the club we were at was very similar to clubs in Europe. The night for me at the club was not very long, but enjoyed going there and soaking up some Brazilian atmosphere!

*Tuesday, May 29, 2007*

Day to go home. I'll make this short section short because it was pretty uneventful. Packed the bike, went to the airport, and yes, all my baggage and bike showed up at the Madison airport. For some reason, the stars were aligned for me that trip.

*Will I do this again? Absolutely! I would recommend this race, even though it is a mental and physical challenge going into the unknown. I knew I could do the distance because of done it before, but didn't know how I'd compete without all the other support you would get in a home-town race.*

*EST was phenomenal. I will give props to them every day of the week and twice on Sundays. They put on a spectacular, well organized travel and adventure for you. I am looking into doing another trip with them, preferably a 1/2 IM this time, as well as seeing if they will put together a special race trip and travel plan for us Midwesterners.*

*As I look back, the thing I enjoyed most was getting to hear where people came from, why they were there, and their stories. The thing I took out of doing this was personal accomplishment. It was the first*

*time I handled all my own training, traveled to a foreign country, and competed in a long distance endurance event. It gives a person a sense of having the ability to rely on themselves internally and complete the adventure. I've decided that this idea of traveling for races is a phenomenal idea and hope to continue it, and bring some of you with me next ! I encourage every one of you to do a traveling race. It's spectacular!*

*There are lots of other little stories and tidbits and photos, but this would be a book if I put it all down. Give me call or email if you want some more. We can share each other's stories!*

*See you out on the road,*

*Jessica*