

## Ironman Canada - Whistler, BC – July 26, 2015 – Race Report

After a decent yet disappointing outcome at Ironman Texas earlier this year, I refocused on the original target race for 2015: Ironman Canada. With 6,000ft of climbing on the bike and 1,400ft elevation gain on the run, I felt like Whistler was a better fit for me. I also looked forward to not racing in 95F and 85% humidity as I did in TX (at least I was hoping it wouldn't be the case). It took a lot of convincing from Mariesa to get me motivated again, but after 2 weeks of recovering / procrastinating, I decided to give my Kona dream another shot. From that day, I switched my mind to focus 100% on Canada.

I felt good about the race despite the knee injury I sustained while training in Lake Placid during 4<sup>th</sup> of July weekend. During the very short build-up, I made a point to apply all the invaluable lessons learned at TX into my training, resulting in what I'd describe as high quality workouts. I took one training day at the time. I was less caught up in hitting my numbers and more focused on enjoying the moment and making sure I was making the adjustments I needed to make.

What a race! So much happened on race day, including my qualification for the **IRONMAN WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP in Kona, HI!** WE DID IT! It took me 9hrs, 57min, and 19 seconds to swim 2.4 miles in the gorgeous Alta Lake, bike 112 miles in freezing conditions, and run 26.2 miles out and about Whistler. I crossed the finish line 19<sup>th</sup> overall (I got chicked 3 times ☹), finishing 6<sup>th</sup> OA in the amateur field, and 2<sup>nd</sup> in my Age Group. It's my second podium at an Ironman-branded race, both happening this year!



JULY 26, 2015

<b>FINISHER</b>		Kevin Portmann					
<b>SWIM</b>	01:01:32	<b>BIKE</b>	05:29:43	<b>RUN</b>	03:20:25	<b>OVERALL</b>	09:57:19
<b>AGE GROUP</b>	M/25-29	<b>AGE GROUP RANKING</b>	2	<b>OVERALL RANKING</b>	19		

IRONMAN CEO,  
ANDREW MESSICK



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### Leading up to the race

Finding the motivation after IMTX was hard. I did not feel like going back to the drawing board and training again for another 140.6. It took a lot of convincing from Mariesa while at a restaurant on a Friday night for me to give this Kona dream another shot. I took 2 weeks off training after TX, which left me with 6 weeks of training for Canada, including 2 weeks of taper. That was not a big build up.

I approached my training differently in that build-up. I focused on pushing myself harder during swim practice, swimming 3 times a week in a fast lane with some serious speed demons! I changed things around on my trainer ride: no more headphones and movies during the long sessions, only me, myself, and my thoughts. It was hard in the beginning to stay mentally focused, but it eventually got less and less hard (we all know it never gets easier). I needed to work on my mental toughness, and especially dealing with that little inner evil voice that was too vocal at IMTX. I found it very helpful and got better and better at “embracing the suck.”

My run workouts changed a lot too. Kevin ([TriCoach](#)) gave me more speed work on track which gave me the confidence that I could run fast. I had a good balance of long runs as well. They were a bit slower than the ones I did for TX, but they all had a purpose and I hit my goals in each of them. Most were done on the rolling hills of Palisades Park, which would amount to around 1,300ft of climbing, similar to what I would get in Canada. I went further and tested my mental toughness one Saturday afternoon with Mariesa, where I ran a 13x1-mile repeat with 7min rest in between. I think it took me 3.5 hours to complete it, 3.5 hours to run on a track in 90-degree weather.

I gained a bit of confidence back when I took the win at the Jersey Shore Olympic tri in June, and had a decent 2.4-mile open water swim.

### Lake Placid Training weekend

Mariesa offered to go to LP for a training weekend. Rumor had it they have a beautiful open water swim with a cable under water and buoys set up on Mirror Lake, and countless opportunities for great bike rides on great roads.

LP did not disappoint. We had a blast there. We both trained and clocked in some great miles on the bike and had great swims. I climbed up White Face on Friday, a 7-mile, 1hour climb, and rode the IMLP course on Saturday. The only hiccup was my Di2 dying on me on my long ride on Saturday. Of course I did not have my charger (or should I say brought the wrong one!), so that made for an interesting end of the ride on Saturday. I did not want to let that ruin the fun we were having in LP. On Sunday morning I went for a ride and started to feel a sharp pain on my left knee. I rode home on 1 leg and decided not to do my long run (2.5 hours), but instead I thought doing a swim would be

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okay. I was wrong. The pain was so sharp that I could barely put on my wetsuit. A year ago, I would have freaked out about not being able to do all my training. This time around I preferred to focus on the good workouts I've had rather than the setbacks and injury.

### 3 weeks to go!

With my knee still being very sore, I decided not to push on it and skipped the last week of heavy training before the taper.

I went from 2 week of tapering to 3, and it felt long, but I was looking forward to going to Whistler and having a good time there. Ironman #2 in 2 ½ months, here we come! Work had been keeping me busy so time flew by. The weather was hot and dry (in the 90s), causing some massive wildfires in BC. The air quality was a concern 2 weeks before race day, but some rain helped clear it up. The weather was supposed to be in the mid to high 60, low 70s at the highest, and mid to high 40s at its lowest, so perfect conditions. Thunder and lightning were in the forecast, but it seemed to be for the latter part of the day. Though swimming is my weakest, I did not want to see the swim cancelled.

### Race Week

#### Arriving in Vancouver, BC



We flew in early on Wednesday morning, and landed in Vancouver around 10:30. I met John Bye and his wife Christine, on the plane and introduced myself. Great folks, and great athletes who travel the world to go to race venues. The Vancouver airport is awesome, and things seem to be rolling at a slightly slower pace than what we're used to in NY, but Vancouver was sending some good vibes. After picking up the luggage we picked up the rental car and drove the Sea-to-sky highway to Whistler. WHAT. A. DRIVE! Wow! Breathtaking views, scenic roads, mountains and islands everywhere gave a stunning first impression of

the region. I was a bit (okay, a lot) cranky because I was hungry, so we stopped at a local coffee shop on the way up. A delicious quiche, decent burrito, and coconut water helped get my mood back.

After checking in at our hotel and relaxing for a bit, I went for a short run around Lost Lake to shake off the jetlag and loosen up the legs. SLOW, but so beautiful that it did not matter at this point. Plus I was not looking to get any speed work in. We checked out the beautiful village of Whistler, grabbed dinner at Earl's (a light salad and sparkling water), and got back to the hotel to get a good night of sleep and explore more on Thursday.



#### Thursday

Thursday was check-in day! After watching the Tour de France (a must!), we walked through 2.2 miles of Valley Trail that took us to Alta Lake. Gorgeous walk and amazing scenery: I was getting a great vibe about this place and this race. We squeezed in a 30min swim in Alta Lake. I paused for a minute and took a 360-turn. The grandeur of the mountains surrounding the lake reminded me of the French Alps. I probably stopped for 2-3 minutes to take in this beauty and realize how lucky we were to be there. After that, it was time to check in and pick up the race packet.



Bib # 171, a transition bag (the exact same bag we received at IMTX!), and of course, I splurged on some IM merchandises with the usual water bottles and running visor. Things were getting real! We picked up the bike at TriBikeTransport, grabbed lunch and headed back to the hotel to get ready to explore.

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Thursday afternoon was spent on the gondola going Peak to Peak from Whistler to Blackcomb for some high-altitude sightseeing. I could not think of a better way to stay occupied and not think too much about the race.



### Friday

I rode my bike for the first time in 2.5 weeks and decided not to push hard at all, keeping it well below the IM wattage target to avoid waking up the knee pain. I ended up riding 45 minutes, and though I wish I did more, taking it easy was probably the best thing to do.

After cleaning up the bike we drove the first 40 miles of the bike course, checked out the Callaghan Climb up the Winter Olympics Park and its tricky corners. The course looked hilly and it got me really pumped.

We relaxed most of the day and had an early dinner. I started packing up my gear bags and planning out my nutrition. The weather forecast changed to rain and cool temperatures in the high 40s for most of the morning, so I had to adjust my nutrition accordingly and favor solid over gels (that's my preference when temperatures drop). It was important to get a good night of sleep, because I knew I wouldn't get much on Saturday night.

### Saturday

Bike Check-in day! Overcast and rainy conditions for most of the morning, we waited for the sky to clear up before walking to transition. The check-in was uneventful (read: easy). I racked the bike and chatted with 2 people of my age group who did Melbourne earlier this year. I covered my derailleurs with plastic bags, taped the bike onto the rack as it was a bit windy, and made sure everything was in order. I checked screws, brakes, and tires before heading to T, and noticed that my rear tubular had a crack that looked big to me. Not much I could do at this point but pray that I would not get a flat on race day. I dropped my bike gear bag and we took a shuttle to T2 to drop off my run bag. All ready to rock! Things were real, and I was getting really excited about this race. Everything seemed to be going well. I did not expect Whistler to be that beautiful, the water of Alta Lake was crystal clear, and for having run 4 miles of the run course, I already knew I'd enjoy the run come race day.



After grabbing lunch at the Brewhouse, we did not do anything at all in the afternoon, and only got out of the hotel to go take pictures around 7:30pm. We did, however, enjoy the Jacuzzi tub and outdoor pool ☺. It was time to try to get some sleep.

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## Race Day

### Morning

I woke up at 3:30am feeling great and excited about this race. I looked outside and saw an overcast yet dry sky. I was hoping it'd stay that way until I got off the bike. I had a large cup of coffee, a banana, and large oatmeal, a sign that I was in a good place. I checked my transition bag for the zillionth time. I was ready! I walked out of the door at 4:15 to go to T2 and drop off my special needs bags and add the nutrition in my T2 bag. I did not want to spend more time than I needed there. I made sure I knew exactly where my bag was and where the changing tent was, but other than that, I was all set. I hopped on the shuttle to T1 around 4:35am and got to the lake by 5am.

Setting up T1 always takes a bit more time. I went to my transition bag, set it up and made sure I knew where it was before checking out the bike. The bike seemed ok. I checked the tire pressure one more time, pumped them back up to 100psi, clipped the shoes onto the pedals, calibrated my power meter to my computer, and I was set. My nutrition was easy to set up as I marked all the bottles, gels, and waffles based on which hour I was going to take them.

I felt no pressure, just the regular butterflies in my stomach. As said before, I took a different approach to this race, focusing on enjoying the moment and ready to put some hard work in. One thing I was going to try to do was not to veer off the main goal: Kona. I had splits in mind, but we know too well that these are very subjective and a lot of factors can impact them. I had a quick 5-6 minute swim warm up, and after a last kiss and last few words of encouragement from Mariesa, I lined up on the beach before heading to the swim start. It was an in-water mass start.

### Swim: 1:01:32 – 10<sup>th</sup> AG | 134<sup>th</sup> OA



I was stoked about the mass start. Ironman has been introducing more rolling swim starts, which I am not a big fan of. The advantage of the mass start is that you know exactly where you are and what place you finish when you cross the finish.

It started raining right after the pros started their day, and by the time the gun went off for the Age Groupers, it was coming down hard. Obviously this was not a big deal while in the water, but with rain usually comes cooler temperatures, which can drop quickly in mountainous areas. This did not affect me at all. All I was focused on was having a good swim.

The gun went off and I immediately sprinted to clear away from the crowd as much as I could. I tried not to sprint too fast and for too long to not burn myself out too quickly, and to my surprise, I reached calm waters fairly quickly. I started focusing on getting into a good pace, focusing on my strokes and on finding some fast feet to draft off of. The first loop went fast! I felt great and hit 2,000m in 30 min (I have alerts set up on my 920). No water seeped in my [Huub Archimedes II](#), and absolutely no chaffing around the neck, though I realized I forgot to put Aquaphor around my neck.

I was waiting for the watch to vibrate and was hoping it would be around 2,000m, which it was. I was very pleased and started thinking I would finally break the hour.

They did not make us run out of the water and back in for the second loop like IM Zurich has it. We just kept going, made a left turn at the red buoy and back we were on the swim course, half way through the swim. Someone decided that swimming backstroke was a good idea. I have to admit, the dude was fast, but he couldn't keep a straight line. Annoyed at first, I stayed on his feet and swam a good 600m behind him. 2,700m into the swim, a guy grabbed my ankle and pulled me back twice, which I thought was a very unsportsmanlike behavior. I don't understand why someone would do that. The swim is hectic enough already to not have someone pulling you back, so when he grabbed my ankle the second time around, I hit him with my left foot. I felt his hand letting go of my ankle right away, and assumed he got the message...

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About 2,900 meters into the swim I started to feel my knee again. I thought to myself that I was up for a long day if I could already feel pain on the swim. I expected it to hurt on the bike and run, but not on the swim. I shrugged it off really quickly because despite the overcast and pouring rain and the pain kicking in, I still wanted to enjoy this day. It forced me to slow down drastically and find a group where I could draft and get to the finish.

The watch vibrated at 1 hour and though I really wish I swam under the hour, given the knee pain, I thought to myself that it still was pretty decent. I was about 100+ yards away when it vibrated, so I knew I was not too far off the hour mark. I got out of the water and grabbed my bike gear bag. 2.4 miles down, 138.2 to go!

### T1: 3:59

For such a short transition, it took me ages to get ready. Well, understandably so as I was doing something I never thought I'd have to do in a triathlon: layering up. While some folks were debating whether they should tough it up and race with just their race kit on, I knew that the temps were in the low 40s already and it'd only get colder as we got closer to the Callaghan climb and on the descents. With this in mind, spending an extra 2 minutes drying myself, putting on a [Trisports](#) bike jersey and Ironman Canada arm warmers could be the make-or-break of the day for me.

Once all geared up, I ran to my bike and saw Mariesa. I was in good spirit despite not really hitting my goals. The bike mount was tricky because you face a short yet very steep climb as soon as you hop on the bike.

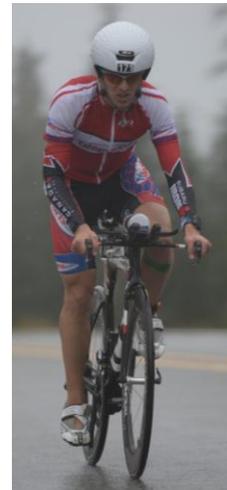
It was go time! I was onto my favorite leg of a tri and ready to have a good time and work hard.

### Bike: 5:29:43 – 4<sup>th</sup> AG | 29<sup>th</sup> OA

Trying to describe how freezing the conditions were on the bike would be hard, and I am sure that if you asked other athletes who raced that day, they'd say the same. A lot of people DNF'd on the bike when they reached Whistler at mile 40ish, and a lot of seasoned IM athletes said that it was the harshest conditions they've ever raced in. Matt Russell, a well-known pro who won here in 2012 explained the ordeal he suffered on the bike that day due to the inclement weather.

Anyway, I still had a blast overall and a lot happened during my 5 ½ hour ride. After 3 miles on the rolling terrain of Alta road we reached Route 99 and were going to ride on it for another 90ish miles or so. By the time I reached 99 the rain was falling hard. Puddles of water were 2-3 inches deep at times, and a lot of athletes rode all over the place because of how slick the roads were. I tried to keep a straight line and avoid the paint on the road and reflectors as much as I could. I felt great on the rolling hills towards Callaghan, and though it was hard to stay within my target wattage, I stayed conservative and focused on drinking and eating. I was soaked by mile 5, but I was okay at that point. I knew I had to be on top of my nutrition. The cold numbs not only your extremities (my toes were freezing!), but it also numbs your sense of appetite and thirst. I made sure to take a sip every 5 minutes and took in my gel early on.

On the Callaghan climb, a 10k climb at mile 20ish, I passed Linden, last year's overall AG winner. He did not look like he was having a good day, a sign that the race spared no one. I paced myself well, without pushing too hard. The climb felt good, and at least I was able to warm up a bit. At the turnaround point I was not looking forward to the 10k of downhill, which is an irony. Before race day, I was looked forward to hitting some high speed and enjoy my fast bike. None of that happened on Sunday. I was on my brakes the whole time, trying not to kiss the ground. I reached 45-48mph and knew that it was not sustainable in these conditions so I progressively brought myself back down to a more reasonable speed. There was a sharp, sweeping turn at the bottom of it with road paint all over, so I decide to play safe and took it slowly, VERY slowly.



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I hit 99 again and the rollers before passing Whistler. I could hear Mariesa from afar, but did not quite understand what she was saying. The roads were so slippery and dangerous that I did not take my eyes off the road.

On the descents towards Pemberton is where I felt the coldest I would feel all day. My front wheel was shaking so hard that I thought I was losing control of the bike and that something was wrong with it while riding at 40mph. I thought about how bad it would be if I were to crash riding that fast in these conditions; it could have been bad. It turns out, nothing was wrong with my bike; my teeth were chattering so loudly and I shivering so much that I could barely hang on to my handlebars. I reluctantly pulled the brakes again to bring myself back to a safer speed, when I should have been tucked in on the aero bars. It was coming down so hard at times that it felt like it was hailing. Maybe it was, but I doubt it. I think it was more of a combination of hard rain and fast descent. I looked at my knees and legs, only to see my skin was still purple 3 hours into the ride. My toes were so numb that it was hard to move them around either. I can't say I enjoyed that part of the race, but I knew that if I were cold, everybody else was. I continued doing a good job with my nutrition, making sure I'd take in a sip regularly and eat enough. I opted to eat more solid food with the Honey stinger waffles and Powerbar wafers than the gels I favored at TX. I think it paid off because I did not have any stomach issues during the entire race.



The weather cleared up when I reached my special needs bag, located right before entering the flat section of the course. My legs turned from purple to red, leaving a burning/thawing sensation. I felt good entering the flats and was looking forward to not be freezing cold for a bit.

To my surprise, the engine shut down and I started battling with jello legs and struggled to warm up again. The turnaround could not come soon enough, and when it did, I was reminded of how dangerous the roads were when I saw the guy in front of me falling. I turned around and headed back towards the climbs, struggling to get the body temperature up. At that point, my wattage was abnormally low, but I had a good form on the bike and unlike Texas, I was comfortable riding on the aero bars. That was a great plus. That kept me thinking that my focus of my small build up was paying off, and I knew that if I could weather the storm and let that hard moment run its course, I'll be able to get my legs back on the climbs.

The flats did not go as I wanted, but mentally I was still there; ready to tackle the last 20ish hilly miles of the course. My plans were completely out of whack at that point. I was way behind the conservative time I thought I'd hit, but it did not faze me. I quickly changed my mindset and realized that at the turnaround I was in top 30 (including pros), so everyone must have been having a slow bike. I reminded myself the Holy Grail today was a Kona slot, not hitting my bike split. I kept repeating to myself what the end goal was, which helped shrug off what looked like a slow bike split. I picked up 2 Honey Stingers chews that contained caffeine and I started to feel the legs coming back to me at around mile 100. That lifted me up, and left me with enough time to spin the legs again before entering T2. At that time, the roads dried up and the sky started to clear up again. If I were to guess, I'd say that the temperatures were in the low 50s as I entered T2. Approaching the village of Whistler was great. A few winding turns took us through the village where people cheered us on. 5hr29 min was not what I had hoped for, but overall, I was very pleased with the way I executed it and how patient and composed I was during the hard times. Swim done, bike done, 114.4 miles into the race and only 26.2 miles to the finish. It was go time!



T2: 1:40

I saw the bike-in arch, dismounted the bike, and to my surprise, none of the volunteers (probably a dozen) were ready to catch my bike, so I started running with it. A volunteer finally took it from me,

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and another handed me my T2 bag. The transitions were great, because they were short. It took me less than 10 seconds to reach the changing tent of T2, and when I got in, a volunteer quickly got to me and helped me open my bag. I took off my helmet, sunglasses, put my bib on, shoes on, and drank the coke I had in the bag while the volunteer kindly gathered my stuff and told me not to worry about it. What a great support! I thanked him and off I was on the run, ready to give it my best to clinch that Kona slot!

Mariesa was waiting for me, and as soon as she saw me she told me I was 4<sup>th</sup> in my AG, only 2 minutes behind. I felt great immediately and knew that I had to be patient and smart about it.

**Run: 3:20:25 – 2<sup>nd</sup> AG | 19<sup>th</sup> OA**

### 1<sup>st</sup> loop

I couldn't wait to get to Lost Lake and admire the landscape there. The first mile had a series of short climbs that I made sure not to overdo. I found a good pace quickly and opted to slow myself down to avoid pushing too hard too soon. I could see a few runners ahead, and passing them gave me even more motivation to maintain a good tempo. The rolling hills of Lost Lake helped me get into a good pace before running the long stretch towards Green Lake. I averaged the first 4 miles around 7:15 pace.



I made sure to grab potato chips, coke, and water in small portions to stay hydrated and get the sodium I needed to reduce the risk of cramps. Also, potato chips tasted SO GOOD after 6 ½ hours of continuous effort. Mariesa was waiting for me at mile 4, and as soon as I saw her I asked her for the gap. I was so focused that my tone was a bit abrasive, which caught her off guard, but she still gave me clear and extremely helpful information. I saw the guy from afar at around mile 6 and the chase was on. The stretch after Lost Lake to Green Lake had sections of false flats, small bumps, and shaded areas. The false flats can cost a lot of energy, but having the target in sight made it that much easier and I knew that I was rapidly closing in on him so I did not want to change the pace. I was comfortable. My HR felt surprisingly slow at 141 bpm. This may be due to the cold weather that helped keep the HR down. I usually am around 155 that early into the run. I did not know whether it was a good sign or not, but all that mattered at that time was that I was comfortable and in control.

I passed him and before I knew it I saw 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> running back towards the finish. At the turnaround point I was about 5-6 minutes behind, but I also widened the gap with the guy behind me.

On the way back I was focused on maintaining my pace. My watch kept saying battery low, which wasn't ideal. I had plans to run conservatively in the first half and give it all in the last 5-6 miles with the help of the watch, but it seemed like it was not going to go as planned, or at least I was not going to get any help from my watch. Mariesa was waiting for me at mile 11 and gave me the gap to the guy in 2<sup>nd</sup>: 5 minutes. I thought to myself that it would be hard but feasible. I was hungry for more!

### 2<sup>nd</sup> loop

I kept my eyes on the trail and saw the "to the second loop" mark. 13.1 miles down and 13.1 miles to go. A lot can happen in 13 miles, but I also knew that for me, it was all about believing in myself, which I struggle with at times. I stayed close to an age grouper for the entire second loop. He tried to drop me at mile 13 right before Lost Lake. I knew that keeping up with him on that climb would probably put me in the red zone, so I stuck to my pace, which paid off because I caught up with him a mile later. He kept turning around to gauge where I was, and I gave him no sign of slowing down or struggling. I never gave him more than 50 yards on me. At that point my watch died on me and it was all about



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running by feel. I had no clue how fast I was running, but that guy helped me keep a good tempo. As the miles went I continued to focus on fueling and hydrating properly. It was important to not skip any aid station, and just as important not to stuff my mouth too much to avoid GI distress.

Mariesa was waiting for me at mile 16ish and told me I was still 5 min from the guy in 2<sup>nd</sup>, and I had a 4 min gap with the guy in 4<sup>th</sup>. I got concerned with the guy coming from behind for a moment, but I forced myself to keep thinking of what's happening in front of me, not behind me. I forced myself to look forward and up, as opposed to looking down. Running along Green Lake got a bit tougher, especially on the false flat sections, and my knee started to hurt a bit, but it was not something I couldn't deal with. I ran to the turnaround point and again made eye contact with the guys in 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>. They seemed so far away and though Daniel Clarke (the eventual winner of my AG) looked strong and comfortable, the guy in 2<sup>nd</sup> did not look that comfortable. I thought it still would be a stretch to shoot for 2<sup>nd</sup>, but I did not let that slow me down. Instead, at the turnaround point, I was able to get a little more speed, which gave me a boost of confidence for the last 5 miles of the race. I thought to myself that 5 miles was going to be roughly 38 minutes of work, and when you look at the bigger picture, 38 minutes, and 5 miles isn't that much to cover when you've already covered 135 miles.

### Last stretch home

At the turnaround I knew I had to maintain the pressure for another 4-5 miles before I reached the "to the finish" mark. I stayed focused and started to visualize the big goal more and more to give me the extra boost of energy I needed. I stayed patient, continued to fuel at each station and tried to maintain a decent pace. I had no indication of what my pace was like, but I knew my legs were still moving, and despite the acceptable pains in the back, knee, and soreness on the legs, I felt great. Running the bridges of Green Lake and towards the finish felt better and better. Seeing the kms getting to 38-39-40 was a relief, and coupled with a huge crowd of people at around km 40 was a massive boost of energy. At the intersection of the "to the finish" and "to the second loop" sign I made that right to the finish. People shouted my name and screamed words of encouragement "you got this Kevin", "keep pushing", "looking strong buddy". Shortly after, I found myself in that no man's land where it got really quiet really quickly before



you reached the village. As I reached the village I made my move to pass that guy I was running with the whole time on the second loop, and made sure that he would not try to come along. He congratulated me as I passed him and even shouted "go get it, kid".

The run through the village was amazing. People were screaming words of encouragements again, but just like last year at IM Zurich, thoughts of all the sacrifices, hard training, numerous highs and lows of the past 7 months resurfaced. It was as if I was running on auto pilot to the finish, thinking that with my 3<sup>rd</sup> place finish I'd get my Kona slot. I was so happy, not just for me, but mostly for Mariesa who has made more sacrifices than one can ask for, and who has been the best support I could have hoped for, and more. Attempting to describe how

supportive she is would not even be possible. It's almost as if I wanted it for her more than I wanted it for me...almost ☺ I could not wait to celebrate with her at the finish, hoping that she'd be proud of me. I wanted to share how my day unfolded and wanted to know what she did during 10 hours. Thoughts went to friends, training buddies, and Kevin Danahy who have been supporting me along the way, and finding the right words to make me realize that I was up there with the best of my AG to fight for Kona.



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Finally after making one last left turn I could see the finish chute, and I ran to the finish knowing that I gave it my best shot with what I had. I looked for Mariesa before crossing the finish, pumping my fist and smiling (at least I thought I was smiling).

It took me 9hrs57min19sec to cover the 140.6 hilly and cold miles of IM Canada, yet hearing the words “YOU ARE AN IRONMAN” had a different meaning this time around. It meant that I was going to Kona, a dream I set as goal back in October of last year. That objective I failed to reach at TX was mine at Whistler. Even better, as I crossed the finish line I was convinced I was 3<sup>rd</sup> in my AG, but Mariesa told me I finished 2<sup>nd</sup>. I told her she was wrong, but this time around I had no problem admitting I was the one who was wrong (prob for the first time :P). I did not recall passing the guy in 2<sup>nd</sup>, but apparently it was around Mile 21. I guess the official Ironman page doesn't lie! She told me that I did it, which I immediately corrected by saying “WE did it” because I could have never done it without her.

### Kona Roll-down



The next morning we woke up around 6 to make sure we were at the merchandise store for the finisher swag. All I wanted was the finisher long sleeve cycling jacket, but Mariesa also got me a mug. We had breakfast and slowly headed towards the Olympic plaza.

At the award ceremony hearing my name being called as 2<sup>nd</sup> in the 25-29 AG was amazing. I picked up the trophy and was probably the only one with a big smile, as if I was the only one satisfied with my performance...weird. As someone told us a bit later, younger age groups don't smile, but as the AG goes up, you see people smiling and being grateful for being there. He couldn't have been more right!

Above all, what I wanted the most was to lock down that Kona slot and pay the \$901 registration fees (how cheap is that...not!). Daniel Clarke did not take his slot, so I was the first one to claim it for my AG. I can't even begin to describe the feeling when they put the lei around my neck and asked me to proceed to the registration table. WE ARE GOING TO KONA!



## Ironman Canada - Whistler, BC – July 26, 2015 – Race Report

### A big Thank You to...

Mariesa, who is my #1 support during my training, racing, and more. She convinced me to get back to training and focus on IM Canada after IMTX and made sure I'd have the best possible training environment for it. She organized the training weekend in Placid, made countless trips to FitWerx to get my bike fixed, and more. She makes sure that I eat well, and helps with all things that could impede on my training. She puts up with a lot, my moods, my long work days, and my crazy 4:30am workouts. I couldn't do it without her, and I cannot wait for our IronmanCation on the big island in October!



**CAPCO**



**Capco and Rob, Ismail, Mary, and Patrick** for supporting me this season. I can't thank you enough for providing me with one of the best bikes that exist today! In addition to giving me an incredible work environment, your support, encouragement, and interest in my passion are very much appreciated! Looking forward to representing Capco this season! I can't wait to represent Capco on the big island!!

[Trisports.com](http://Trisports.com) and Seton and Debbie for giving me the opportunity to represent their top-notch online tri store with their Elite team! The great customer service, couple with the wide variety of the best products one can find today in all 3 disciplines and more will guarantee you to be well equipped for your season! Thank you so much for having me in your Elite team! I will see you guys in KONA!



**FitWerx** and Joe for always looking after my bike and dealing with my last minute requests almost all the time! Joe and Ron provide pro-like service to all customers. Hit me up if you want to go talk to them!

**Huub Design** for making me comfortable and fast in the water. My new wetsuit is incredibly flexible, comfortable, and fast! It felt particularly amazing at IM Canada, snug and fast with little to no water sipping in. What a product they have here! I can't wait to swim with my swim skin in Kona!



**Hawk-Racing** for allowing me to race on some fast wheels! Light, stiff, yet very fast, the Veyrons are incredible to ride.

**ClutchPT** and Josh who is always there when I need his PT expertise! I needed him after the knee injury sustained at Lake Placid and he made it easy for me to go see him. His diagnosis reassured me in a way, and with some rest and advice on how to treat it, I was able to toe in the line in decent shape. I couldn't see who else in the Tri state area is better suited than him to treat athletes!

And of course all my friends and family! Thank you all for being so involved in my passion!

Thanks and happy training!

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