

After the Accident
By Rick Christensen

For those of you do not know me, I'm Rick. Yeah, the real tall guy built more like a basketball power forward; I did that for 15 years, than a triathlete.

Triathlon is more fun, unless you happened to get T-boned while down in the aerobars at 20mph and subsequently hit in the leg by a truck going well over 50mph. I remember lying on my back, feeling my fingers and toes, and coming to the realization that I was not paralyzed. While I pondered that phenomenon, I heard the friendliest voice I have ever heard. His name is Scott, and he and a friend had stopped in the middle of the road to help me. He kept in touch with Meg the whole time I was on the side of the road, and he even brought my bike to my house when I came home from the hospital. How's that for kindness. Scott told me the he knew I was going to be okay when EMS informed him that I had been able to them his name, I had broken my leg, I had had them call Meg, and that I had directed EMS to take me to MUSC. As soon as I was in my hospital room, and the day after the accident, I emailed the sponsors in the local tri community to warn everyone about what happened. I do not know a cyclist or triathlete that has not been in the same spot a million times. I was doing everything possible to protect myself. Thanks to Trysports guys, John Glover at Charleston Bicycle Co., Mike and Patt Loggins from Extra Mile and Paul King, the Sprint race director, for immediately taking calls and responding to emails. Paul even picked up my mangled bike at my home, despite the fact that my 4 ½ year old sons Peter and Jack were having a meltdown to boot. Thank you all for your kind words and support.

Five minutes after I had just finished a vicious interval workout was when the accident happened. I had turned around on Folly Road to cool down and head home, when a truck hit me. The jerk could have at least hit me when I was breathing hard, in pain, and hammering away at 25mph. (I could only hold it for three sets of 7 minutes, but I like to sound fast!)

Seriously, while I sorely lack elite ability, I consider myself a sportsman. I love triathlon because for me it is what every athlete dreams of "a second chance". I have managed to improve in the seven years that I have been in triathlon, and I even had two very respectable Ultra Distance finishes: 12:25 in 2005 and 11:51 in 2006, which is not bad for a 6'6" 220 lb Clydesdale.

Before the accident, my training was going really well. After a solid season opener at the Coastal Triathlon, I really opened up my speed work. I was planning on peaking for the Father's Day sprint with my short course speed and then transitioning into Ironman Training for IronMan Florida. I was going to shoot for a sub 11.

Before you get out the Kleenex and start to feel sorry for me-don't. This is a bad injury, but others have had far worse. Stephen Thompson was in a horrible accident a few years ago. I bumped into him at one of the races, and he was saying his PR was off. I looked him dead in the eye and told him I had the greatest respect for him for even getting back

on that bike. My other hero is my soul mate Meg. I wish she did not have to endure the pain and recovery from her own medical problems over the last few years. . She is the real Ironman, and I am damn proud of her. Don't feel too sorry for her either. After having had surgery in Feb 2007, she is almost finished with her Master's degree in teaching, elementary education.

We all have pain and frustration in our private lives. For me, triathlon is an outlet to release that pain and frustration. I am sure my fellow competitors feel the same way. When we suit up on race day, we are athletes, from the Zachs (Stroud) to those at the back of the pack. We have no past, only now. While the clock is ticking, we are giving it everything we have. Life sometimes deals us bad cards, no doubt, but like my favorite on screen athlete, Rocky Balboa says, "It's not about how hard you hit, it's how hard you can get hit and keep moving forward. How much can you take and keep moving forward?"

I have been hit-very hard and will get up. Tune in to IronManlive.com on November 1st.for the Ironman Florida coverage. I am going to give it everything I have to be there. I am not giving up. I have raw determination, strong work habits, and a will of steel. I was an Ironman long before I learned how to swim or to ride a bike.

Train safe,

Rick Christensen



Chuck and I definitely show Clydesdales come in all shapes and sizes



Rick coming into transition at the Chesapeakeman Ultra Distance after averaging 20.5mph for 112 miles. Ran a 4:30 Marathon off the bike to finish in 11:51:14 Won Clydesdales and finished 43/192 overall men.