

THE TRIATHLON AT HILTON HEAD, SATURDAY, APRIL 24, 2004 (500 yd swim, 12.5 mi bike, 3.1 mi run)

RUN		RUN		SWIM SWIM		BIKE BIKE		BIKE BIKE		RUN		
CUM		CUM		Splt		Split		Cum		SPT		
Place	NO.	NAME	CITY	ST	AGE	S	Plc	Time	Plc	Time	Plc	Time
PLC	TIME	PLACE	TIME									
224/271	214	Don Slogar	Summerville	SC	42	M	269	34:10	160	43:26	243	1:17:35
	90	26:17	224									1:43:52

swim: 500 yd/34.17 min = 500/1760 mi/ 0.57 hr = 0.50 mph
 bike: 12.5 mi/43.43 min = 12.5 mi/ 0.72 Hr = 17.36 mph
 run: 26.28 min/3.1 mi = 8.48 min/mi

This was my second Tri! Things did not go exactly as expected. In fact, my adventure began long before the race started. Do you want the long story or the short one? The short one is I had a blast, and to top it off I actually finished and did pretty decent (in my mind), except for the swim. The long version follows.

I think I woke sometime between 3 a.m. and 3:30 a.m. I can't remember and I did not exactly wake up either as I had to set an alarm. I was glad it was not cold outside as I was able to wear my racing gear and no sweats. Sometime around 4 I was on the road, and it was a nice ride until the car became hard to steer and the road seemed to be making the car shake and make noise. I pulled off in what had to be the only lighted area for miles. Since it was dark out I was glad for that and for not having to stop on the road, as there was no shoulder. Anyways it turns out the tire went flat. Put the spare and the thought was this can't happen again with no spare. Down the road spare is not working. Car makes noise and I have a fear it would blow. My thought was go home or continue?

I stopped several times to inspect and it took a while each time before it would act up. Before I knew it, it was 30, then 20, then 10 miles to the exit, then I was there. The car was acting like a boat, but I maintained a slower speed and kept on. I figured there could be worse things than being stranded on an island, should it come to that.

When it passed 6:30, I realized I was missing the brief. Ok, no matter I told myself, as long as I get to the water before they start. I was using mapquest directions and it had an error from the start, so I wondered if I was in the right place. That traffic circle was confusing and I could not find the race site. Asked one person in a vehicle and I had to turn around. Asked another on foot and I had just passed it, so had to go around and come back, but finally, I had arrived, with a few minutes to spare. The brief was still

going on. Got bike off the car, got helmet, got water bottle on bike and forgot towel so had to go back. I went back to car a couple times, forgot for what now. Got race packet and placed bike. I had missed the brief, but verified 4 loops on bike and one on run. Got pins for the race number. Got marked and got race chip. I had already decided to use no sunglasses so that would be one last thing to fiddle with. I had everything I needed and I was motivated. Tire problem now not in the forefront of my thought.

It was a beautiful day and I was in a race. being in a race is an awesome experience. I was glad I was mentally and physically prepared. Timing on arrival had been a problem, but now that was past, the whole reason for it all was now before me. Spoke to someone doing his first tri and I felt like it was not so bad I was inexperienced. Getting to this point it had helped to talk to people, and I am thankful to all those people, but now it was all on the individual. The water was not cold, and I was thankful for that. It also was not very wavy.

The start was a little after 7. It was good in my mind, since it gave me more time to think a little and relax, although being hyped up does not fit with being relaxed. Anyway They said go and everybody moved. It was walking at first then some started to swim. After a few strokes and swallowed salt water, I just tried to swim keeping head up, but that was not working, so I got on the back, at least I could breathe all I wanted. I could not relax and I could not get into a rhythm. What a bummer. There was a group of about 1/2 dozen or so around me and that was comforting, but as we got close to the buoy they started to pull away. The kayaker said there was another buoy, but I could not see thru goggles, had to lift up. By this time goggles had become a hindrance. I don't know if they help at all swimming on your front. Then finally I could see the last buoy. Kayak ran next to me to pick up someone and I had to kick boat to get it away, then that, whatever it was began bumping me. Scared the living u know what outa me. I grabbed the kayak at that point and said I did not like it. I had thoughts of all those jelly fish on the beach and I had thoughts of shark. I have been told since that shark bump their prey before the attack to make sure they are alive. I will need help with this thought to ever get back in the ocean.

Kayaker kept asking if I wanted help and I kept saying no. There was only one way for me to get in and that was under my own power on the course. I know they are there to help, but that was annoying. I wish I could be closer to everyone else. Anyway, as soon as I passed the buoy they took it away so I knew I was the last. Finally being able to stand up felt good and people cheering felt good, but now was the time to get down to business on the bike and run.

I felt stong on the bike coming out on first loop, but was somewhat tired after that, so I just maintained. I kept passing people, and the faster ones were looping me I guessed. How can they go so fast? I thought I was fast, but I said to myself, I had not been training this year, so this being my first time on the bike, I would not expect to be the fastest one out there. Swim training had apparently not helped, but at least I could still be functional on the bike. I still felt good.

I hated counting the loops because it distracts from the race performance I think, maybe it would be better to have an out and back for that aspect, but after the bike loops, I wondered if I could even run because my inner left thigh hurt so I could only limp. I got out there anyway, slow at first, but then it began to loosen up. My theory was that I was now using different muscles and my body needed time to adjust. After a while I was passing people and that felt good, then it happened. I began acting strange, totally out of character. I started reading peoples race numbers off their arms and greeting them.

Then I started getting cocky, I guess is what you would call it. I started telling people I was the last out of the water. I started reading peoples legs. One lady matched my age and I told her that and that I was last. She said she was also last at the last race and said go. I met a 20 year old male and I told him I had 22 years on him. I said how ya doing, I said boy, u better get your butt in gear, and he took off, I said, great pace from behind, but he could not keep it up and I said see ya. I said I wish I was doing this at 20 and said good job. Sure hope he knew I was just having fun.

I was talking to the road guards. I told them I was last out of the water. some people could not understand so I had to repeat. I said I was last outa the water but I am not last now. How did that happen? I told the policeman on the right before the 2nd last turn that he yelled at a pickup to go, go, go right in front of me on bike and it almost killed me. It's true, I was so startled the truck went I was pumping it one stroke and the next locking my brakes. Gave me a real fright.

I met one man on the run and said I passed a 20 year old and I was last outa the water and how come? he said conditioning. I thought to myself, that's a good concept. I am conditioned, like when you turn on your airconditioner and everything seems fresh and cool. Yea, I did not feel 42 u know? What is 42 supposed to feel like? I was starting to let that age creep in until that bridgerun in 2002. I was not happy with the performance, and that started My trek back to conditioning. Yes that was a good word, I decided and being out here feeling good brings purpose to all that sweat and training. At least I had been injury free, and feeling sore after a workout does not last days at least anymore. I was conditioned and I was having fun, what more could you ask for?

By the time I got to the finish, no one could hear me tell them I was last out of the water. I was expecting about 1:30 based on the distances being less than my first tri. Well, I am only off 13 minutes. That could be T1 or T2, totally unrelated to performance. That could be related to not training on bike. But, it definitely is also the swim. I know where I need to work, but not exactly how. It did look like I did not improve much on run, but the bike only went a little down, so it still rests on the swim...

In the meantime if you are reading this and you have any ideas about the swim aspect, swimming in the ocean for performance, and dealing with the psychology that critters are out there, drop me a line at slogardj@go.com I am especially interested to know what that critter bumping me was. Well, maybe I don't want to know?

BTW, after the race I moved the bad spare to the rear and rear to front thinking I might get home better that way. I even took the opportunity to rotate the other side, because tires were due for a rotation anyways. It turns out there was a tire shop, american auto centers, or something like that. I would never have gone to a place like that, but the water showed a leak at the valve stem and they changed it out for free. What a blessing. I put the tire back on and it worked great. Strange occurrence, even drove on it all weekend and no problems.

BTW, I felt like I had such a blessed day, that I approached a gentleman having trouble starting his car at that tire shop and we worked on the spark plug wires a bit and I shared car repair stories and tried to encourage him to do some troubleshooting instead of only relying on mechanics. I don't know if he would take the advice, but it felt good to give back.

This whole day was strange and beautiful at the same time. I felt good, not really tired or sore at all, but I was particularly at my jovial attitude and talking to everybody. The man at the tire shop saw my race number and I told him the story of the fish and he said people could get bitten by shark or there could be an accident or any bad thing and it would not be publicized because the island authorities want to keep it a vacation paradise and not publicize anything bad. That was not comforting.

Anyway, all turned out well. I did not have to call a tow truck. I did not have to call anyone to get me home, and I did not have to bike 100 miles back home (would have been good training opportunity, huh?). Life is good, isn't it? Now I look forward to the next tri adventure....

Some final thoughts: Either I am not cut out for doing this and should just be satisfied to even be a finisher and NOT LAST overall, or I am just running with the elites and it's no wonder I cannot compete with them now and I have a long way to go.

Only time will tell. It might take me to age 50 or beyond to be competitive, huh? Thoughts are that maybe I just maintain and I will naturally fall in and place as an age grouper in the next age group (not! how do those old folks move so fast?), but the definite bitter sweet aspect of this exists in that I had heartache with the car and elation with the overall race, I had fear with the creature in the water and regret over being last, but I did eventually finish in a place other than last!

I thought, what a comeback because on the bike I passed roughly 30 folks (according to the numbers) and after the run the numbers showed I had passed roughly 47 folks for the entire race. Pretty good in my mind after coming from last don't u think?