

## St. Anthony's Race Report

If you are wondering, Yes, I have been trying to avoid writing this race report. I have been trying to avoid re-living an overall disappointing race. But there is no way out, when I decided to have a webpage I made a commitment to myself to write these reports. So here it goes, it wasn't all bad.....

Heading to St. Petersburg, Florida to race at the St. Anthony's World Cup, I thought I had my strategy all figured out. I had developed my game plan from my experience of racing there last year. In 2002 I selected a position on the pontoon to the far left, and when I got to the first turn buoy which is 280 meters from the start pontoon, I got pummeled. I knew this year I was going to pick in the centre which theoretically was suppose to be the shortest line. I was going to go out hard and make it around the corner near the front of the pack. If you don't get in a good position after the first turn it is always very difficult to pass people later. Well everything fell into place, I picked a good starting spot right in the middle of the pontoon. So, I was confident I would have a good start.

Race morning we woke up to overcast skies and cooler temperatures (still warm though). This was a pleasant change because last year it was blazing hot and humid and definitely took a toll on many athletes, including myself. I got down to the starting area and began my swim warm-up; the water was nice but really murky. I was feeling pretty good. As we began lining-up in the marshalling area, the wind started to pick-up. Due to a combination of the wind, overcast skies, being all wet, we all started getting cold. I made sure to put on some extra clothing, which I normally wouldn't have bothered with, and tried to keep warm.

Once we were all lined up on the pontoon, and ready the gun went off.... I sprinted out of the start and felt really smooth and strong. There wasn't anyone around me I was enjoying all this space, this was unusual. I even made it around the first buoy in mostly clear water and near the front of the pack. Things were going as planned. The swim course was a rectangle shape that we would swim around twice and then exit out of some stairs into transition. About halfway through the first lap of the swim, the girls started to get rough. I am not sure if it was because I got too comfortable and my pace was too slow or if everyone else just accelerated but people were all over me. On my left and my right and practically overtop of my legs. I started to panic and my swim stroke changed into survival. I felt like my whole body was sinking and my arms were just moving as fast as they could but I wasn't holding any water. It was like a nightmare! This is how I swam the next lap surrounded with people and a bit panicky. You waste so much energy when you panic but every time I tried to relax someone else would slap me or hit me. By this time I was still in contact with the front pack but fading fast. I could see the stairs up ahead and girls starting to exit. I was going to have to have a fast transition. Up and out I ran there were still a group of girls around me. I had a smooth transition and hoped on my bike. I sprinted as hard as I could and could see the lead group forming up ahead. There was a little gap to a few of us stragglers and I was hoping we could work together and catch on. We were totally anaerobic at this point. Only one person managed to

bridge the gap to the lead pack but I wasn't strong enough to go with her and was stuck in the second pack.

The bike course in St. Anthony's was 9 laps and after working really hard to catch up for the first half a lap, I was spent. I had no energy left and our little group of 4 or 5 wasn't working together. We rode for another couple laps very sloppily until the 2<sup>nd</sup> main chase pack of 20 caught us. There were a few familiar faces in this pack. It was large and unorganized. I was even a bit scared of some of the other girls who seem to have trouble handling their bikes smoothly. I moved through to the front once or twice but ended up getting stuck up there at the front of the pack because no one would pull through. Each lap we would pass the lead group (they were going to other direction) and they were getting further and further ahead. I decided I would save what I could for the run and see what I had in my legs. In Japan a few weeks earlier, I was running to survive only. I didn't run like my normal self there and I chalked that up to dehydration. Now that we were in Florida and it wasn't as hot, I was hoping to show better run form than I did in Ishigaki.

By the end of the bike leg we were a whopping 3 minutes down on the lead pack! I made a quick transition and sprinted out on to the run course. I started off really fast. I knew I wouldn't be able to keep that pace up but I wanted to blow off a little steam and get my legs turning over. Eventually I got into a nice rhythm and felt good. Michellie Jones and I were swapping turns breaking the wind, this made it easier to focus during the run and also keep a good pace going. On the last of four 2.5 km loops, I could feel the blisters forming on my feet (new racing flats! Ouch) and I started to compensate in my running form. I held myself together mentally and managed to catch a couple of the athletes from the first pack. I crossed the finish line looking strong and there was no collapsing this time (refer to Ishigaki race report). I finished 15<sup>th</sup> which was really disappointing but I did manage to have a strong run. It is nice to know that my running form is coming back and this will give me confidence in the races ahead. I do need to work on a few things; i.e. being able to relax on the swim and holding a better pace throughout the entire 1500m. I also need to work on the run from the swim to the bike transition. Maybe if I kick more when I swim my legs will have more blood flowing through them and be able to move faster, when I need them too.

The other positive aspects of the race, I stayed with a wonderful family, Kevin and Betsy Cureton, and their children Carolyn, Casey and Corey (twins). They took Tereza Macel and I boating the day after the race. I also went shopping! It felt great to buy some new clothes and shoes.

Overall, to put this race in perspective, this was my worst World Cup placing in my career (besides crashing in Mexico last year at Worlds). I feel very fortunate to be doing triathlons as a career so I always remind myself to be positive and take time to enjoy the training. Thank you everyone for the support!