

Dana Spencer

Ironman Lake Placid 2011

We came we saw we conquered! Kinda...

I AM AN IRONMAN! I did it. Not that I ever doubted I could do it but the unknown has a way of biting you in the ass sometimes and Ironman is the greatest unknown. From the minute we swiped our credit cards, called the coach, asked for the wife's blessing and put the date on the calendar we have never really known what to expect. The tales of Ironman misery and glory are all over the internet and everyone who calls them self an Ironman has more than a few horror stories to tell. However the one thing that stands out amongst these tales of woe is the all say they would do it again. Not all do do it again, life gets in the way sometimes, but you will never hear someone say they wish they hadn't done it.

That is just the way it is. A very satisfying achievement which I would not ever compare to a birth or a wedding like so many do. I can only speak on one of these things (married one year one week) and I would never compare the two. Your wedding day usually does not consist of 3000 sweaty miserable people all struggling to get somewhere but never really going anywhere. Basically we swim, bike and run around in circles all so we can get back to where we started. I will say without a doubt my wedding day was far more enjoyable and it did not include cliff shot blocks.

That being said completing an Ironman is by far one of my greatest accomplishments. It took the most dedication, the most sacrifices, and TONS of money. And it was all worth it. Coming into that stadium finishing in front of hundreds of spectators, family and friends was a special moment. I have done a lot of things in my 31 years, many of which I had to struggle to achieve and this is one I am very proud of. I put it right up there with finally reaching my life long dream of becoming a firefighter. It took the same dogged determination and mindset to achieve both goals. I set my sights and I took aim. I made sure I crossed the t's and dotted the i's. I did not rely on luck, or wait for things to come to me. I went out and did what I had to do to make sure I got what I wanted.

The day did not go as planned. From what I hear it never does. I took in a ton of lake water and got sea sick on the swim. Combine that with a non-wetsuit swim and I got out of the water 24 minutes after I thought I would. Hanging on to a kayak as I puked twice in the water exactly .6 miles from shore was not in the plan. But the day never goes as planned so I pushed on. From there I hopped on the trusty bike and set out to finish what I had started. The bike went exactly as planned. I wanted a 6 hour ride and aside from 3 minutes (got to at least slow down when you pee on your bike) I nailed it. No problems, no dark moments only my desire to erase that poor swim and set myself up for a sub 12 finish. So I got off the bike just before the 8 hour mark leaving almost to the minute, 4 hours to run a marathon which I had been trained to run in 3:45. Perfect right? This did not go as planned. From what I hear it never does. Went out with the right mindset and just plugged along. Walked all the aid stations to make sure I got my nutrition down and then ran to the next one. This went on for 14 miles. 1:58 for 14 miles, perfect now I just need to maintain and I can check that sub 12 goal off my list. Then Ironman decided 128.6 miles into my race to put up a wall and make me earn my stripes. They did that and more. From there on it was all mental. The legs were spent the sun was hot and the gatorade was warm. Nothing was gonna stop me but there sure was nothing there pushing me either. I reached into the well and dug deep and the body just said enough. With about 8 miles to go I did the math in my head and realized sub 12 was out. I was ok with that because I was gonna be an Ironman regardless of time. And so I just plodded along and made sure to enjoy the moment. Lake Placid offers a great run course for enjoying the last few miles and especially entering the olympic stadium on a downhill and getting to soak in the cheers from hundreds of spectators.

And then it was over. Never having set up a meeting place with the wife so I just kinda stood there. It was over and I had no one to share it with. Then it happened. I looked back and saw the faces of the other finishers as they came down the shore and I realized what we all had accomplished. I was now a member of a fraternity and we were all family so to speak. We started congratulating each other and everyone had that I just did something special kinda smile. After that I met up with my wife and I felt such a relief come over me. It was done. There was no race tomorrow and if I never choose to do another (yea right) I could do it knowing that I saw this to the end. The medal was around my neck, I had just become a part of a very exclusive club and I could finally stop moving in circles. The day was perfect. Bad swim? what bad swim? hitting a wall on the run? ahh it wasn't that bad. 12:19 and change, not bad for my first Ironman.

So what now. Big let down right? No not really I cured that post Ironman fever with plans for a half Ironman in September to wind down the season. Already had planned on Ironman Cozumel in 2012 to just so I would not wonder what is next. But regardless what ever happens from here I am branded an Ironman and I am very proud to say that. Might even get it branded on my leg just to remind me of what I accomplished but more importantly that **ANYTHING IS POSSIBLE!**