

Xterra Philippines (aka Vaseline-man)

For Christmas this year Kathy gave me a Go Pro. Like the idiot that I am, I left it at home and missed out on some amazing footage. I would give anything to have had that camera on my bike for Saturday's race!

There are so many incredible experiences that I've been exposed to over the past week. I would love to share all of them with you, but the best was the bike leg of race:

I came out T1 with a solid swim, the first mile of the bike is on the main road in Liloan. The road is crammed 3-4 deep on both sides for the entire stretch to the trail head, then off road, into the hills. The number of people in the Philippines can be overwhelming. The traffic, diesel fumes, cars, buses, vans, bicycles, motorbikes and the way they are driven are amazing. Combine that with 95' weather and 80% humidity and everyone gets a bit agitated. The interesting thing is: the Philippine people are amazing calm, friendly and welcoming.

The Xterra Philippines race is the largest event held on the island each year. As I left the main road and started to climb, I thought the people would thin out and like most mt bike courses, you're out racing by yourself just concentrating on what you're doing. This race, the spectators lined the course for at least 80% of the bike course! The course went through people's backyards, through a pasture with cows grazing, a basketball court, paved and dirt roads with various animals, around an auto body shop (that was sanding bondo and spewing white dust onto the bike course), and through a pig farm. As you're flying along on the bike, every hut you pass has a fire going outside for cooking, no plumbing or electricity. The animals are wandering around the yard and I'm hoping that none of the animals decide to move into my path.

It's very rustic and just amazingly different, real Xterra! On the last quarter of the bike lap, you are flying on swoopy single track through a lush valley, with a roller coaster feel to it and it brings you over a thin concrete bridge, then along a barbwire fence, into a small village that is packed with spectators and animals. As I ride between the barbwire fence and a building, the track empties into a courtyard and then onto a paved road. I notice blood and feathers on the ground at the turn (it was right in the racing line, but I didn't think too much of it). Because the bike course is two laps, you have to contend with lapping riders on the second lap. It is important not to get held up behind a slower rider on single track or a tight section, where passing is impossible.

On the second lap I needed to pass two riders before the bridge and barbwire section, I managed to get by both, and enter the bridge with no one in front of me. When I got thru the courtyard I'm building up speed and set up for the left turn onto the road.

At this time a small dog decides to go from one side of the spectators to the other. I'm going about 17 mph and just start to grab the brakes so I don't hit the spectators or the dog and a foot comes out of the crowd and punts the dog into the other side of the spectators, they dog flew about 4 feet thru the air! Sorry pet lovers, but I definitely would have crashed into the dog and hit a couple of spectators if the guy didn't kick the dog. On the second lap as I'm descending into the valley and beginning the single track portion, I'm thinking: I can't believe I'm here, I'm having a blast, this is just amazing!

At the awards ceremony I spoke with Ben Allen, who won the race. He said a chicken ran into his front wheel in the same location hence the blood and feathers on the ground at the same turn...the chicken didn't make it, but I'm sure someone had a nice chicken dinner on Saturday night!

At the awards ceremony, they had made a mistake with regards to timing at the finish. They had one of the female pros mistakenly in my age group. So I ended up with the win.