



Finishing: It's All That Really Matters

Redman Triathlon Race Report Oklahoma City, Oklahoma September 24, 2011

This is my fourth Redman race report, and repeats many things mentioned in the previous ones. If you haven't read them, they can be found at www.gojim.tv.

Something new this year is a forthcoming video of this year's Redman using photos and video footage taken with a digital camera/videocamera that I carried throughout the race. Look for it to debut in the next several months.

For me, this year's Redman Triathlon was all about finishing. My first-ever DNF ("Did Not Finish") at the Silverman Triathlon last November was hard to accept, even though I had done my best and missed the final bike cutoff by only 15 minutes, thanks to an unrelenting headwind on the second half of the extremely hilly course. Ever since Silverman, I had doubts in my head as to whether I still had within me the ability to finish an iron-distance triathlon (2.4 mile swim, 112-mile bike, and 26.2-mile run), despite eight previous finishes in nine attempts over the last eight years.

Training

What added to those doubts was my training in the past year. For years, my annual training volume had been declining. To finally break that trend, I stepped up my volume in the past year by 25%, from 192 hours in 2010 to 241 in 2011, as the following table shows:

12 mos. ending September 30	Swimming (yards)	Bike (miles)	Run (miles)	Total training hours
2003	141,100	3,412	957	384
2004	155,100	3,462	797	395
2005	183,700	2,265	883	326
2006	97,600	2,160	789	298
2007	82,600	1,958	565	257
2008	80,300	1,319	559	215
2009	42,700	1,067	530	190
2010	52,000	1,003	542	192
2011	70,580	1,251	675	241

However, you have to look beyond the numbers to understand why I wasn't too confident in my training. Much of the volume increase was due to swimming and running, and my running speed and endurance while training just weren't very good. A little of it can be blamed on injuries--a pulled hamstring weeks before the GO! St. Louis Marathon in April, for example--and a lot of it on the hottest summer weather since I started doing triathlons in 2003.

The key to finishing an iron-distance triathlon is the bike segment. You can get by with a mediocre swim, and you can walk the marathon if you have to, but there's no faking the bike. The distance (112 miles) is simply too long for that. Yes, you can slack off and not push yourself hard, but if you haven't trained adequately, you're either going to fail to finish the bike segment or your marathon is going to be a miserably long and slow ordeal--if you're able to finish it at all.

As the above table shows, my bike mileage was up 25%, but, again, it's deceptive. Very little of it was actually out on the road, where you're dealing with hills and weather--the two things that make cycling hard, and training important. Partly because of our extremely hot summer, I did most of my miles on a bike trainer and recumbent bike in the lower level of my house. Those miles certainly count for something, as I pushed myself pretty hard while putting them in, but I usually rode just for an hour or two. That doesn't give you much confidence that you can ride for seven hours or so come race day. Since January 1st, I had only ridden outdoors three times before going to Redman, with rides of 70, 17 and 18 miles. That's just not enough.

Wednesday, September 21st

I drove the 375 miles to Oklahoma City in about seven hours. It was a beautiful day, and I was glad to have all the training and packing behind me. I could finally relax and focus on Redman. I stayed at the Courtyard by Marriott, where I've stayed on three of my previous trips to Redman. The official race hotel was the Marriott, but by the time I was making hotel reservations, it was fully booked. That wasn't a big deal since the Courtyard by Marriott wasn't very far away from the race site, and was even more conveniently located to shopping and restaurants than the Marriott. It's a very comfortable place to stay and parking is close by. I had a second-floor room, so I saved lots of time by using the stairs at the end of the hallway to come and go. (When you're constantly coming and going during your stay--often with groceries and triathlon gear in hand--that makes a lower-level room close to the parking lot very welcome.)

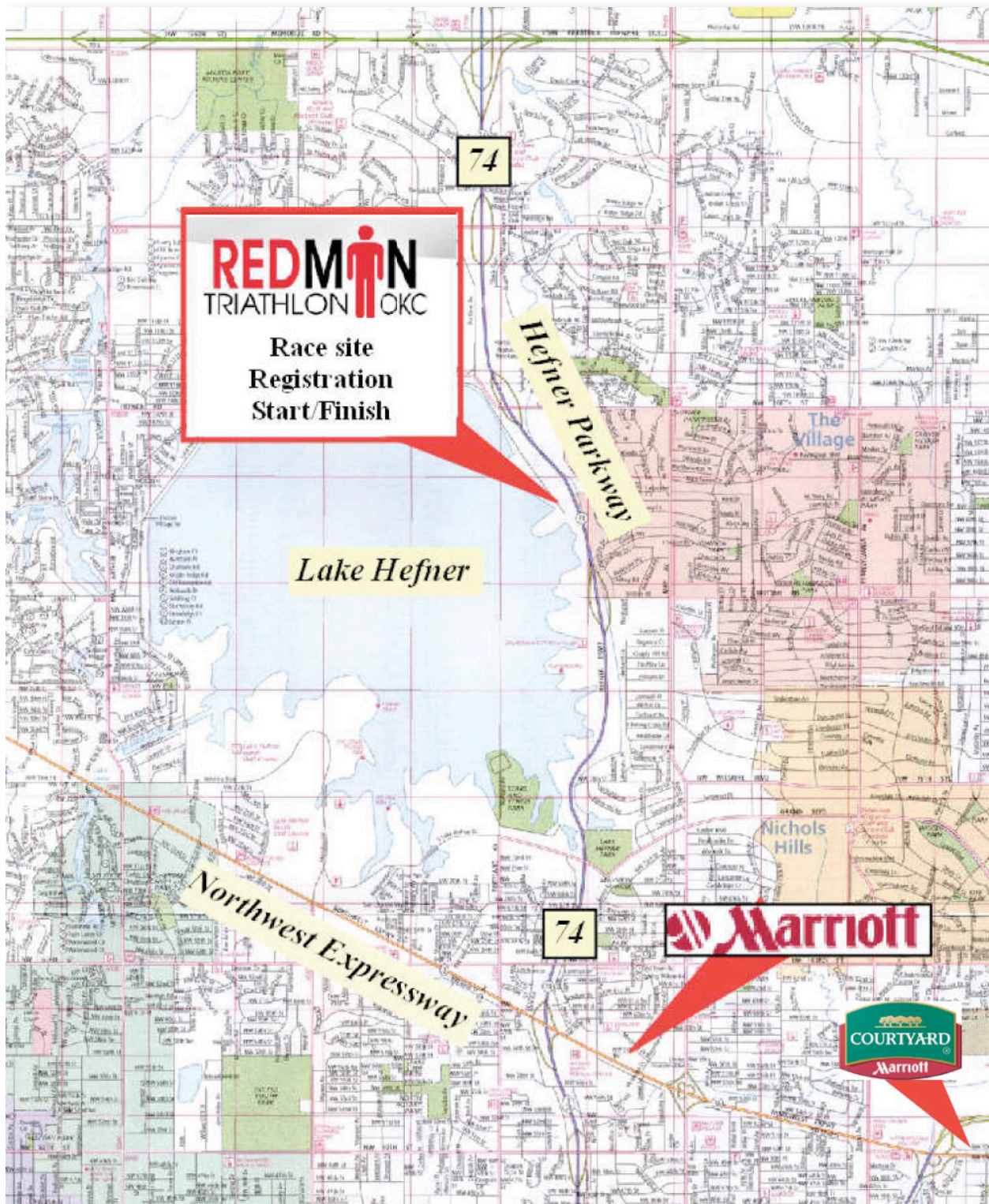


The Courtyard by Marriott. There's a McDonald's right next door and tons of shopping a couple blocks away. While it's not as nice as the Marriott up the street, I prefer this hotel.

Thursday, September 22nd

Thursday was a day to relax. I took a ride out to see the Redman race site at Lake Hefner, although there wasn't much to see other than the lake itself and tents being erected. It was quite an eye-opener, though, to see how low the lake level was, thanks to the long drought in the region.

In the afternoon, I stopped by a Best Buy store and bought a new Canon digital camera. I already owned an old digital camera, but this one had the capability of shooting high definition video. Making videos is a hobby of mine, and for days I had been hemming and hawing about buying a small videocamera and carrying it with me during the triathlon. I wasn't sure I'd end up taking any video, or shooting enough footage to make it all worthwhile. Let's just say that that \$225 purchase was perhaps the best investment I ever made. The photos and video I took on race day are absolutely priceless memories that will last a lifetime. I can't wait to share them with everyone once they're put in finished form.



The Marriott is the host hotel, and is very convenient to Lake Hefner. Northwest Expressway offers all kinds of shopping and restaurants within a few miles.



These photos, taken at the same location in 2011 (top) and 2009 (bottom), show just how low the water level was at Lake Hefner this year. Many other boats at other marinas on the lake were either sitting on mud or on trailers in a parking lot.

Friday, September 23rd

The day before a race is always a bit stressful, and this was no exception. In the morning, I started going through all my triathlon gear to figure out what I was going to need and wear during the race, and put it in stacks on the bed. One stack for swim stuff, one for bike stuff, another for run stuff, and finally one for my run special needs bag. Then it was time to secure to the bike the things I might need for the bike segment, like tubes, CO₂ cartridges, multi-tool, etc. This sport requires a lot of gear and attention to detail. If you're disorganized, this is not the sport for you. Forget to put your bike shoes in your bike transition bag, for example, and you might as well have slept in on race morning.

I went out to Lake Hefner after a spaghetti lunch to register and pick up my goody bag. Redman has some of the nicest swag of any race I've done. This year, those of us doing the full (i.e. iron-distance) Redman received very nice backpacks. (In previous years, we received gym bags and laptop bags, all of which were great.) A Redman logo'd hat, t-shirt, towel and lots of smaller goodies were included. It's all very much appreciated.



After returning to the hotel, it was time to take the stacks of gear and place them in the proper transition bag and then put my race number on the bike. I was a bit sleepy, so I took a nap for about an hour before going back out to the race site to drop off my bags and attend the mandatory pre-race meeting. Just as I walked up to the tent where an earlier pre-race meeting was almost finished, I saw an athlete in the front of the audience proposing marriage to a young lady who was also at Redman to race. (She said, “Yes”, in case you’re wondering.) Marriage proposals at triathlons are usually saved for the finish line. Perhaps he wasn’t too confident he’d make it that far.



The ramp to our swimming hole, pictured the day before the race. Two years ago, the far end of the ramp was under water.



Triathletes have their very own version of “Where’s Waldo?”, called “Where’s My Bike?”. This photo was taken early Friday afternoon, with many other bikes yet to be dropped off.

I was planning to go to IHOP after the meeting to eat some pancakes for dinner, but I really wasn’t very hungry. I had been snacking between meals during the day and didn’t want to stuff myself. So, I went straight back to the hotel and ate some light foods in my room. Looking back, I’m glad I did, because the hour I would have spent eating out was much better spent preparing for the race.

I climbed into bed around 9:00 p.m., after setting three alarm clocks (I never rely on one, and a second backup doesn’t hurt) for 3:50 a.m. I slept lightly and glanced at the clock every time I woke up, hoping I had plenty of time before having to get up.

The race stress roller-coaster

For several days, a triathlon is a seemingly never-ending roller coaster of things that either create or relieve stress. In my case, deciding what to pack to bring to Oklahoma City was a little stressful. Getting in the truck and driving to Oklahoma City reduced the stress level. Preparing my transition bags was stressful, since I'd have no way of correcting a mistake once the race began. Dropping off the bags and bike late Friday afternoon relieved that stress, because I was done with that least-fun part of the preparations. Getting last-minute things done before going to bed Friday night was stressful because of the fear of forgetting something important. Going to sleep put that fear to rest (pardon the pun) for about seven hours. The three hours before the race start were the most stressful, and each hour was worse than the previous one. The peak was about 30 minutes before the race began, when it was almost time to put on my wetsuit. I spent a few minutes sitting alone on a curb in the transition area with my eyes closed, trying to relax. (Others were doing the same.) The stress dissipates quite a bit as you join the crowd of athletes heading to the water for the swim start. I think that's because you no longer feel alone, the race is here, and you want to get going. Finally, once the gun goes off, there is no stress whatsoever. You just swim, bike and run.

Saturday, September 24th - Race Day

I woke up a few minutes before 3:50 a.m., so I didn't need my alarms after all. I ate breakfast, took my supplements, applied my Tri Tats (see below), got dressed, packed the last of the things I needed to bring with me, and left for Lake Hefner just before 5:00 a.m. There was no traffic to deal with, so I was able to pull into the parking lot around 5:15 a.m.

Higher tech race numbers

Redman did something that was new (at least to me) this year, and that is to use "Tri Tats". In our race packets, we were given temporary tattoos of our race numbers--and two numerals for our age--to apply on race morning to our arms and legs. (In years past, they just marked us manually with Sharpie pens on race morning.) I read the instructions several times to make sure I would apply them correctly, but I wasn't sure these were a good idea. I managed to apply them OK (trust me, I saw plenty of athletes who failed to turn their age numerals in the correct orientation, ending up with something like "EE" instead of "33"), and they turned out to be pretty good. After the race, I purposefully didn't buy some rubbing alcohol, as instructed, to remove the tattoos, preferring instead to see just how long they would remain visible. Nearly 2-1/2 weeks later, I could still see some vestiges of them. That's pretty impressive.

Weather

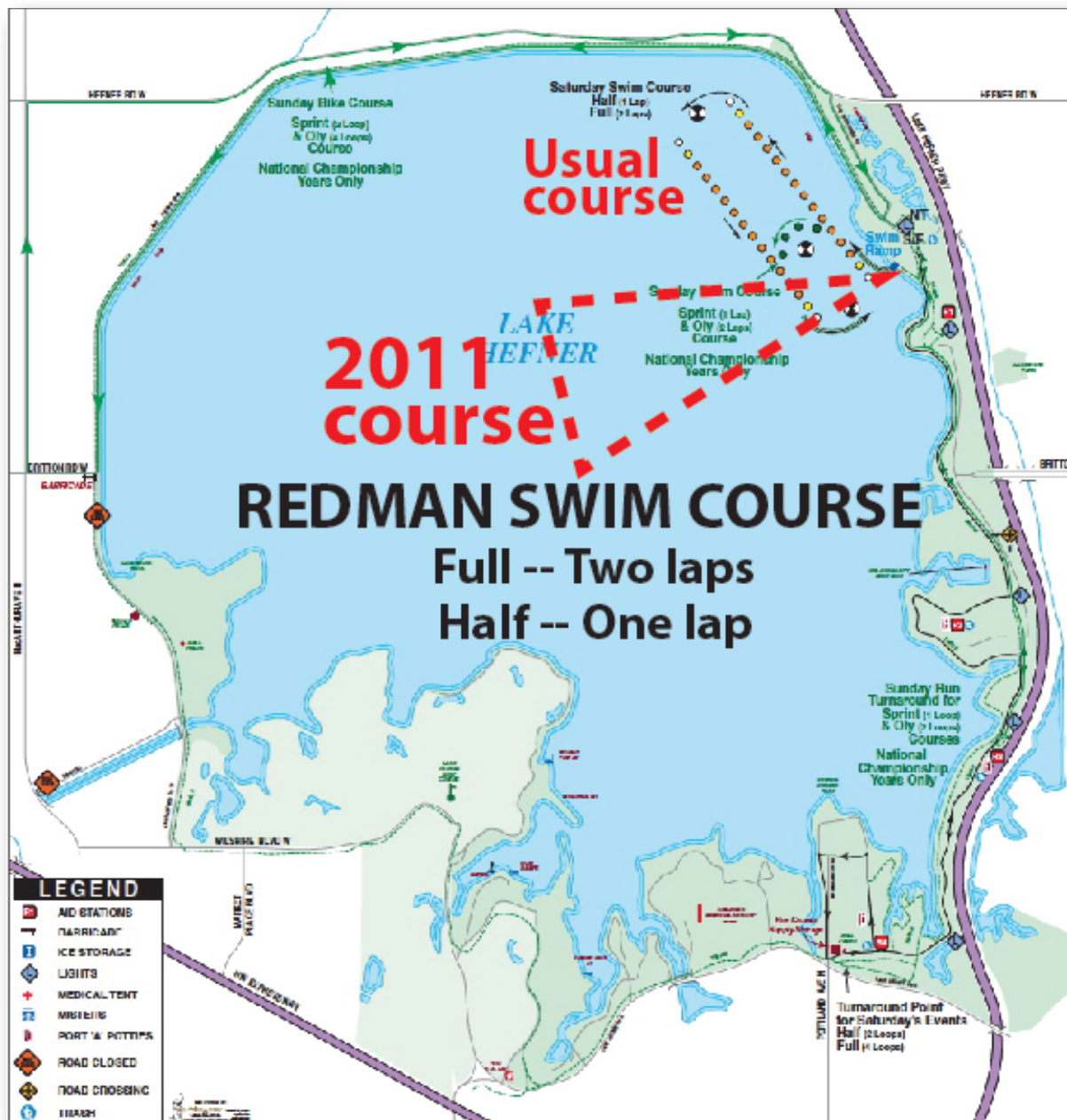
I kept a close eye all week on the weather forecast for Saturday. Early in the week, the forecast looked outstanding--a morning low in upper 50s and an afternoon high around 80. I didn't let myself get too excited because I've seen forecasts get steadily worse in the days leading up to an event, and race day turns out to be far worse (e.g. Ironman Wisconsin 2005) than originally expected. In Oklahoma, wind can be as big a factor as temperature. At Redman in 2006, a headwind for 28 miles on the bike course gave me some of the worst lower back pain I've had during a race because of the additional effort required to pedal into the wind.

This year, we had near perfect conditions for Redman. For the entire morning and early afternoon, it was absolutely perfect. It was cool, the humidity was low, the winds were light (only 3-5 miles per hour) and the skies were clear (except for some high clouds that helped filter some of the sun's heat at times). However, by early to mid afternoon, the south wind picked up to 8 and 9 miles per hour, and the air temperature rose steadily from 78 at noon to 88 by 5:00 p.m. The wind made southbound sections of the bike course a bit difficult by the afternoon and, for those of us setting out on the run course in late afternoon, temperatures around 86-88 degrees--combined with the complete lack of shade on the course--were way too warm for a decent marathon.

Actually, we got somewhat lucky. Had the race been held one day earlier or later, we would have been facing much stronger winds--up to 16 miles on Friday and 17 on Sunday. However, temperatures were lower on both days (83 Friday and 78 Sunday), and that would have helped. Had I been given a choice of which day's weather to race in, though, I would have still chosen Saturday's. It was a beautiful day.

The Swim

All of the athletes were gathered near the swim start corral by 7:00 a.m. The race was to start at 7:15 a.m. for the approximately 280 athletes doing the full Redman and aquabike (i.e. swim and bike only), with the roughly 550 athletes doing the half Redman starting in four separate waves behind us. We were given some last-minute instructions, then marched out to the water, one group or wave at a time.



The swim was two loops (just one for those doing the half Redman) of a triangular shaped course out toward the center of the lake. In recent years, the course ran parallel to the shoreline partly for the benefit of the spectators, but the low lake level prevented that this year.



Shortly after 7:00 a.m., as we're just about to enter the water and begin a long day.

While the swim was technically an in-water start, the water level was only a couple feet deep on the right-hand side of the start area where I positioned myself. When the gun went off, those athletes in deeper water started swimming, but I just walked alongside them for about 50 yards until the water became deep enough for swimming. I tried not to walk too quickly in the knee- to waist-deep water. I made that mistake in 2006 and saw my heart rate skyrocket. It took some time to get it back down and settle in. It's a long day, and there's no reason to start it off poorly.

The swim went well, but not as well as I had hoped. I was having a little trouble maintaining a straight course because of fogging of my goggles. I didn't expect that since the goggles were a brand new pair of the same model I wore all summer, and they had an anti-fog coating applied at the factory. It caused some difficulty spotting the turn buoys at the far end of the course nearly a mile away. But then, since I wasn't exactly leading the pack, I was able to use swimmers ahead of me as guides to the turn buoys. Still, I was zigzagging too much, and that annoyed me a bit.

A 2.4-mile swim is a long, long way. And it's very, very boring. I think the worst part comes about one-fourth of the way through, when you realize that you already swam a long way, but still have to swim three times that distance to complete the course. The upside is that when you reach that quarter mark, your breathing, effort level and heart rate are all finally in sync, and it's just a matter of making progress toward the finish, one stroke at a time.

Exiting the swim is always a welcome moment, but this one had its share of humor. The wet, red clay mud along the shoreline was as gooey as could be, making it extremely difficult to get (and stay) upright. Just being in a horizontal position in the water for over an hour makes it tough to get one's "legs" when coming out of the water, but the mud made us look like we were all drunk. A few volunteers were standing in the mud trying to help us get out, and they, too, were having a tough time remaining vertical. It was a nice comedic moment after a long, boring swim.

I finished the swim in 1:22:42, a pace of 1:58 per 100 yards. I was a bit disappointed. I had my best swim ever at Redman in 2009, finishing in 1:16:13, and hoped to come close to it.

My watch had obviously lost its waterproofness (it's a word; look it up) during the swim. When I got out of the water and looked at my watch, the LCD was blank and condensation had formed under the crystal. Apparently when I replaced the battery a couple years ago, I failed to correctly seat the O-ring washer to keep moisture out. The watch was cheap and I didn't have a time goal for the race, so it didn't bother me. I asked a spectator at the start of the bike segment what time it was, and then used the stopwatch on my bike's GPS unit to figure out what time it was until the end of the bike segment. On the run, though, I didn't really care about the time, and didn't ask anyone until I started the last lap at around 9:15 p.m. Unless you have a time goal in mind, not having a watch isn't that big a deal. Sometimes, you become a slave to it.

I had help stripping off the wetsuit, then proceeded to the changing tent to get ready for the bike segment. My transition time was 12:28. I could have shaved a minute or two off that if I hadn't stopped to take some video after the swim.

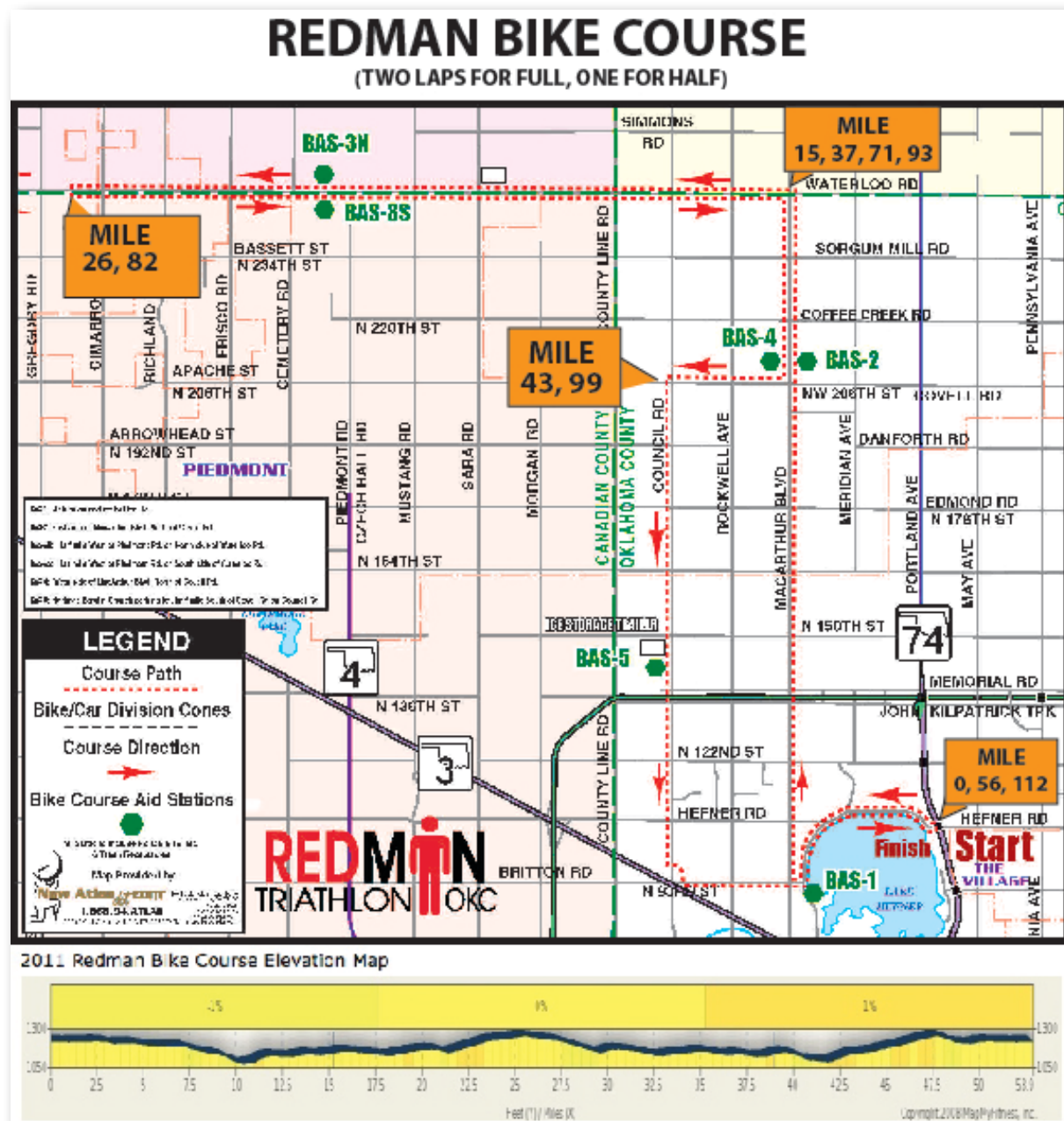


What's the first thing you're supposed to do after finishing the swim at a triathlon? Why, pull out your camera and asking someone standing nearby to snap a photo of you, right? (Man, I need to lose some weight!)

I survived the swim, but would the camera?

I wanted to take some video of the athletes gathering at the swim start with my brand-new camera/camcorder. I knew, though, that this meant I'd have to keep the camera with me throughout the swim. The question was whether I would be able to keep it dry. If it got wet, it would probably be ruined, or at the very least be unusable for the rest of the race. Fortunately, I had a waterproof pouch at home that came with a swimsuit I bought years ago, and I gave it a try. I shot some video just before the race started, tucked the camera into the pouch, and then stowed the pouch inside the top of my two-piece wetsuit. Much to my relief, the camera stayed completely dry. My only regret is not taking video of the actual swim start, then putting the camera away. It's not like the extra 30 seconds it would have taken would have cost me in the race standings. Stupid, stupid, stupid.

The Bike



The bike segment was two loops of a 56-mile course, much of which I had ridden in my three previous trips to Redman. There were really no surprises here. Even the large potholes on County Road didn't faze me. One thing's undeniable about Redman: where the roads are good, they're smooth and a pleasure to ride on, but where they're bad, they're really awful. On those bad sections, you take your eyes off the road surface ahead of you at your own peril. Thankfully, the race staff did a great job in marking the potholes and crumbling edges of the road, and I didn't have any incidents. The roads are my only complaint about Redman. The race staff, of course, has no control or influence over road maintenance, and changing the course route isn't the answer because there are bad road sections everywhere around the city. There's simply no way they could piece together a continuous course with nothing but good roads. I guess I'm spoiled by the relatively good roads in Missouri. Oklahoma City has some of the worst roads I've driven on, and in five years it hasn't improved at all.

The first 50 miles or so of the bike went great. The weather was fantastic, I was feeling strong, and nothing was hurting. I stayed on top of my nutrition and hydration, and took my supplements (Endurolytes and Succeed) as scheduled. It's at around the 50-mile mark, though, that things start to get tougher. My legs were starting to tire, my speed was dropping, my feet were developing hot spots, and the hard bike seat was making things a bit uncomfortable. Nevertheless, I just kept pushing the pedals. You don't have much choice.

As planned, I stopped at the aid station near the halfway point for a few minutes to stretch my legs, use the porta potty, massage my burning feet, replenish my Gatorade and water bottles, and, last but not least, take some video of the volunteers. When all of that was done, I jumped back on the bike to ride another 56 miles. I reached the halfway point after 3:25:00 on the bike--only a bit slower than the 3:20:00 it took in 2008, and about the same as in 2009 when the early part of the bike segment was ridden in the rain.

The second half of the bike went well. I stopped a couple times to massage my burning feet, but other than that I was feeling fine. The southbound section of the course between miles 99 and 106 were made more difficult by the southerly winds that became a little stronger by early afternoon. As a result of the wind and my legs getting tired, the second half of the bike took about 20 minutes longer than the first.

I finished the bike in 7:13:46, an average speed of 15.5 miles per hour. I would have liked to have finished in under seven hours, but it was close enough to give me some comfort that perhaps my bike training wasn't too bad after all.



Stepping off the bike after successfully finishing a 112-mile bike course provides a big emotional lift during the race. Unfortunately, it lasts only as long as it takes to realize you still have to run, walk or crawl 26.2 miles to get to the finish line, and that realization comes almost immediately. No matter how many Ironmans you've done, this plummet from an emotional high to an emotional low in a matter of seconds is always one of the cruelest moments of the race.

The Run



The run was four laps of a perfectly flat, 6.55-mile course on a paved walking and biking path along Lake Hefner. I hate a four-lap course of anything. On the second lap, you're wishing you were on your third, and on the third lap, you're wishing it was your last. It's all mental, but it drives me crazy. It's great for the spectators, though, since they can see whomever they're cheering for up to eight times.

I've had problems at the start of the run at many of the eight Ironmans I've completed. Usually, it's a bloated stomach, caused by some combination of too much fluid intake toward the end of the bike, too much solid food eaten while on the bike, and/or a slowing in digestion caused by pushing too hard on the bike. For this Redman, I really wanted to see if I could avoid a repeat of this old problem, and I actually managed to do so. I took the last miles of the bike relatively easy and didn't drink any more than necessary to stay hydrated. I don't ever recall feeling as good starting the marathon as I did this time. My stomach was fine.

I felt so good--relatively speaking, of course, since I had been in motion for the last nine hours--that I jogged (as slow as I was, I can't call it "running") the entire first mile of the run course. I'm not sure I've ever done that. Usually, I walk at least some of it, especially if my stomach tells me to.

I stopped at the aid station at the 1-mile mark to get some Coca-Cola (it's what keeps me going during the marathon), and walked a little bit after that. My plan was to run when I could and walk when I needed to. I try to minimize the walking, but there's always a risk from pushing yourself too hard and running too much--cramping, dehydration, bonking, etc.

I was running (pardon the pun) into a big problem with the heat. I started the marathon shortly after 4:00 p.m., when the temperature was 87 degrees. While the humidity was comfortable, that temperature, combined with the total lack of shade on the course, made it very tough to stay hydrated. I was sweating heavily. I was drinking at every aid station, and in-between them from the bottle of ice water I was carrying. The temperature peaked out at 88 degrees at 5:00 p.m., when I was about 5 miles into the run course. An hour later, when I was near the 10-mile mark, it had dropped to 86 degrees. It fell into the 70s over the next few hours, but even that's pretty warm for running a marathon.



This was quickly turning into an exact replay of the heat-related dehydration problems I had at Redman in 2008, only this time the temperature was 6 degrees warmer. At mile 10, I started feeling light-headed. I knew at that instant that my “racing” was done for the time being, if not for the rest of the day. I stopped running and started walking, but wasn’t certain that I’d be able to finish. Sixteen miles is a long way to walk, and doing so would take roughly four hours. I wasn’t feeling all that well. Also, my feet were hurting from some blisters, so every step was a bit painful. (The real pain from the blisters hit a couple days later when they popped.)

Miles 10 through 18 were tough--the toughest of the entire race. Since I was going so slow, I had plenty of time to think. I kept telling myself that my only goal at this point is to finish, no matter how long it takes. I resigned myself to a very slow finish, and told myself that after having finished eight Ironmans before this race, I had nothing to prove by pushing myself any harder. Most of all, I didn't want another DNF.

Tim Smith, YOU ARE AN IRONMAN!

Triathlon is a relatively lonely sport. It's designed for participation by individuals, not teams. There aren't many triathletes in the general population and, for most triathletes, most of their swim, bike and run training is done alone. Even at the races, there isn't much interaction between athletes except before and after. For many triathletes, a lot of their shop talk is done over the Internet.

Just prior to this year's Redman, I traded e-mails with Tim Smith of Iowa City, Iowa. Tim had read a Redman race report that I had posted online. He was attempting his first iron-distance at Redman this year. He had had problems with cramping in past, shorter-distance triathlons, and wasn't sure he'd be able to avoid them at Redman. He was particularly concerned about cramping on the swim and not meeting the two hour and 30 minute time cutoff for it.

Frankly, I was worried about him. The swim is not something about which you want to have any serious doubts. It could be dangerous. Too many triathletes have died during the swim.

I looked for and found Tim in the transition area shortly before the race began and wished him well. He had mentioned to me in an e-mail that his name appeared on the back of his Iowa Hawkeye racing singlet.

In mid afternoon, at mile 98 of the bike course, a racer passed me, and I just happened to glance at him while he was a few yards ahead. I couldn't help but see "Tim Smith" on his singlet. I was absolutely thrilled to see Tim, since it meant he made it through the swim and now nearly all of the bike. I hollered and sped up to him to chat for a few seconds before I dropped back. I saw Tim at least once more on the run course, and he looked great. He ended up finishing in an outstanding 13:30:19, and earned the title of "Ironman". I couldn't have been happier for him.



At mile 18, I was feeling much better, and I started to run again. I didn't think running could be any more painful than walking, and was anxious to hurry up and get the race over with. I ran as much as I could, but often no more than 50 yards at a time.

No rules against having fun

I must say that while this was turning out to be my slowest finish at Redman, it was also the most fun. I've always surmised that those at the back-of-the-pack have more fun than those at the front, and I was going to prove it to be true.

I had an absolute blast taking photos and video with the spectators and volunteers. Yeah, I was hurting, but the fun with my camera helped my spirits tremendously. On the second half of the last lap of the run course--when I would see the aid station volunteers for the last time--I stopped to take videos with them, and the footage is absolutely priceless. As I said before, that \$225 camera purchase was one of my best investments ever.

When you see the finished video, you'll know why I think had more fun at Redman than all of my fellow athletes....combined.



Hangin' with the volunteers on the last lap. Wearing the "Go Jim!" jersey once again helped break the ice with the volunteers and spectators. They were all cheering me on as if they knew me. By the end of the race, I think I may have been their favorite athlete of all. They were the BEST!

The finish line

Despite the dehydration problem and having to walk most of the last 16 miles, I persevered and reached the finish line. Running down the finish chute and crossing the finish line was just as exhilarating as any of my previous Ironman finishes. As always, I was quite animated and vocal going down the chute, acknowledging and thanking the spectators and volunteers. It's such an incredible feeling to finish a triathlon like this. I really missed that feeling at Silverman last year, and it felt great to experience it once again.

I finished in 15:22:36. That placed me 7th (of 8) in the male 55-59 age group.





Post race

I felt OK after crossing the finish line, mostly because I wasn't able (or willing) to push myself harder during the marathon. I hung around the finish line tent for a while to drink some soda and watch a couple other finishers cross the line. I collected my bicycle and gear bags, then walked nearly a mile (it seemed like the longest mile of the day) with all this gear in tow to where my truck was parked. When I arrived at the truck, I wasn't feeling 100%. I went through the drive-through lane at a McDonald's on May Avenue on the way back to the hotel and ate some solid food. Other than some bananas eaten on the bike course, it was the first solid food I had eaten since breakfast. I felt much better soon after.

A large blister had developed on the bottom of my right foot during the marathon. (Strangely, the very same thing happened at this year's GO! St. Louis Marathon in April.) I could walk without too much trouble on Sunday. I even spent a few hours Sunday afternoon helping to pick up trash around the race site. By Monday morning, my feet started swelling--so much so that I needed to wear bedroom slippers for comfort while driving home. The swelling got worse by Monday night, and I had to sleep with my feet elevated on a pillow because of it. Tuesday was the worst day, what with the swelling and the large blister that had just popped. I couldn't walk without a lot of discomfort. Thankfully, the swelling in my left foot went away the next day, and the right foot the day after that. (I had the very same swelling problems after Redman two years ago, when I also had the very painful subungual hematomas under my big toenails.) The pain of the blister took a couple more days to diminish to the point where I could walk normally. You have to expect something to hurt for days after a race like this.

Awards Ceremony

The awards banquet was held Sunday morning at the Marriott. It was a very nice ending to a wonderful event. When I did Redman in 2009, the race was also host to the Halfmax National Championship and Club Championship events, and the usual Redman awards ceremony was skipped. You have a much greater appreciation for awards ceremonies when you do an event that ends without one.

Conclusion

I can't say enough good things about everyone connected with Redman. The race staff and volunteers are second to none. Many of them are athletes, and their goal has always been to put on a race that they'd like to do themselves. That's why this is one of the best races anywhere, and why I keep coming back.

Thanks for reading!

Jim Glickert
Osage Beach, Missouri
October 2011