

Putting the Sexy Back in to Race Day Bike Collisions by Jasmine Wong

I chose the San Francisco Triathlon at Treasure Island to mark the one-year anniversary of my very first race, a tribute to one of the most beautiful locations in the world, and my own personal heartfelt bond to this particular race. Plus this was going to mark my very first Olympic distance race! Come race day. I woke up at 4:30 and started my race day routine. The weather was slightly overcast and the wind was just chilly enough to bite the first layer of skin through my fleece jacket. Alarm clock, check list, breakfast on the drive over to the island, watch the sunrise and the kayakers set up the swim course on the bay (arriving early and doing all this is my form of pre-race meditation), transition set up, warm up and stretching.

I watched the first wave sets start, collegiate, the Biggest Loser Contestants and, the male 34 and under. I quickly learn that sighting is crucial in this race and poor sighting seemed to cost a really fast swimmer who was swimming in zigzags his first place position to a girl who was both swimming and sighting really well. I got into my wetsuit, joined the rest of my pink capped wave at the stairwell entrance to the water, gave race director Joe Oakes a big high five and hug, and was ready to rock. I was focused and in Zen mode up until the very last 10 second count down. My heart rate monitor registered my heart jumping from a gentle 101 to 120 in these few moments.

The bell went off and my heart did a little jump just as I kicked my feet up and started swimming, surprisingly this time the water was a lot warmer than last year, and I felt acclimated almost right away. As soon as I could, I made some clearance away from all the floppy kickers, backstrokers, and closed-fisted freestyle swimmers. It was smooth sailing, and I remembered to sight every few strokes and incorporated this seamlessly in my strokes, just as I practiced so many times.

At the end of the swim I staggered out of the water, ran up to transition while peeling off my wetsuit and changed as fast as I could. I jumped on my bike pumped up to hit the 6 lap looped course. I planned to use my bike computer to signal my mileage and let me know what lap I was on, but to my surprise, from the get go my bike computer was not registering anything at all. Shoot! I'm going to have to yell out at my friends to help me count the laps. My bike number was taped too loosely to my bike, and was wavering in the wind and hitting my knee at every pedal stroke. No big deal I can handle these problems. This is a route I have become familiar with. I look up every once in a while to take in the view of the city skyline and Bay Bridge while riding.

About 5 minutes into my 1st lap, I decided to fuel up with my favorite chocolate mint GU. I reached into my bento box, rip it open mouthwateringly, suck it up, and reach down to put it away. As soon as I did this I heard the loud whirring of a bike a bit too close behind me, and a man's voice yell, "watch out!" just as he crashed into the back of me. I felt his bike clip into the spokes of my back wheel, and all I remember from that moment on is: cement, sky, cement, sky, the skin

on my shoulder and leg scraping up against the ground, bike equipment flying everywhere, and screaming out in pain.

Am I okay, what just happened? Is he okay? Is this the end? A year of training, boiling down to this very moment, and is it all over? I curled my body up into the fetal position in what I think was a complete state of shock for several moments. I remember cyclists whizzing by asking, "Are you okay?" In a daze, I remember not finding the ability to bring words to my mouth to respond. The man who had collided with me asked, "Are you okay?" Everything literally seemed to occur in slow motion I realized I was okay. I helped the other rider up, untangled our bikes and moved them out of the middle of the road. I was crying, sobbing like a baby.

One of the other athletes decided to turn around and call out for medical help. A cop rushed over and asked if we needed an ambulance. We both refused. I asked John, the other cyclist, how the accident had happened. He said he wasn't paying attention and was looking at his bike computer. John helped me fix my bike, the wheel was a bit off, shifters needed adjusting, and he put the chain back on. We both decided to keep riding. I gathered my scattered belongings, and we both hopped back on our bikes with the determination to finish this race, no matter what.

I tried to make up for lost time in the rest of my laps but I could feel my muscles strain and throb more than ever before. I made a conscious decision to just finish the race and to not go as hard as I originally intended. My 24 miles went by fast, and soon I was in bike-run transition and off running! My HRM read that I wasn't quite up to race pace, but I was fine with that because by then everything pretty much hurt. I disregarded all my pain and kept going.

At the turn around of my first run lap, a guy passed me and yelled out, "nice look!" I asked a girl I was passing moments later, "Is there something wrong with the back of me?" She told me I had a huge tear on the butt of my shorts. During the crash, I somehow managed to rip a large hole in my tri shorts over my right butt cheek. I reached felt a gaping hole with bare skin exposed. Every time someone made a comment from that moment on, I smacked my butt and yelled, "Yeah, I know it's sexy, keep looking!" Instead of cowering in my own embarrassment, I made light of this slight technicality.

By mile 5, my legs, knees, and body were screaming for me to stop. I powered through and screamed through the finish line with my arms raised in the air, meeting up with my friends yelling and screaming as I ran towards them. My hamstring cramped up at the very end, someone threw a medal over my neck, and at that moment I felt my eyes welling up and I started crying. This was such an emotional moment for me, words cannot describe it. I was done, finished, tapped out, exhausted, and near incapacitated.

Limping away, I felt on top of the world. We took pictures, and I made sure they got a good close up of the butt tear in my shorts. We walked over to first aid and post-race food as I shared my crash and recovery stories with them. Then this

man wearing a shirt drenched in sweat, he'd just finished racing too, walked over to congratulate me on my recovery from the crash. Turns out he was Pete, the winner of The Biggest Loser Season Two. He dropped over 200 lbs during that show and is now an inspirational speaker on health and fitness. WOW!

We watched the pros race for a while, cheering on Victor Plata, my pro-triathlete neighbor and 2008 SF Triathlon 1st place pro elite winner. He has been a huge inspiration to me throughout my training. We walked back to the car with naan and Paneer Makhrani from Little Delhi on the mind. Then back to my sister's place in San Francisco to crash out for the rest of the day. Best sleep of my life!

So there it is. I'm back home, recovering from it all. I will never forget this experience. One of my good friends Joe said. "It seems like triathlons are such a great metaphor for life". He's right! When you crash and fall, you pick yourself back up and tri again! Just like in life I'm resuming my training tomorrow and hope to raise some money from friends and family for my next and last race of the season, Pacific Grove, to take place in September, I hope to see you all soon and if you are out there training, I will see you out at the lake, bike trail, or McKinley park! Ciao for now!

