

## Wildflower 2010 Race Report By Michelle Raynaud

Long story short, I finished the race, but it wasn't pretty at the end and there was a brief period of time that I didn't think I would finish. Wildflower long course is half-iron distance, 1.2-mile swim, 56-mile bike, 13.1-mile run. My stretch goal was 6 hours 45 minutes. Real goal was 7 hours, which I did not meet. Oh well.

There were almost 100 women in my wave. The first  $\frac{1}{4}$  of a mile was a nightmare with arms and legs and feet thrashing all over the place and some swimmers were starting to panic. I actually remained calm and swam the entire way without stopping or freaking out. I did get a calf cramp a couple times, but no big deal. I hated the swim and was happy for it to be over. I got out of the water in 46 minutes. Not bad and a decent pace improvement off my previous race pace.

I ran to the transition area, tore off my wetsuit, put on my helmet and shoes, sprayed on some sunscreen, and took off on my bike. The course was very hilly. I had a good first hour and then an even better second hour, increasing my speed. I was really trying to fuel up for the third hour, which includes the infamous Heart Rate Hill aka Nasty Grade. There is about 1000 feet of climbing in about 4 miles. I made it while riding my bike, which is better than I can say for many who had to get off and walk their bikes up. Surprisingly, I still felt good.

The last 10 miles weren't too bad although my legs were a bit tired. It really started to heat up, about 80 degrees at this point, and then the lovely head wind came. With about 5 miles to go, on a short hill, I stood up to get a good push; my legs cramped, and I fell back onto my bike. I needed to run 13.1 miles and my legs are cramping. I wasn't prepared for the heat on the bike, having left all of my salt tablets in transition for the run. I decided to just focus on the bike portion and I finished at my goal time of 3 hours 40 minutes.

When I dismounted my bike, I looked up to see my brother cheering me on. I hobbled to where my gear was, the whole time wondering how I was going to run. I put on my shoes, took in some salt tablets, grabbed my visor and then tried to stretch a little. When I tried to stretch my quads, my hamstrings cramped and when I tried to stretch my hamstrings my back killed. On pure adrenalin, I just decided to move and did some run, walk, goofy looking hobble thing out of transition. I saw my family and said, "I kicked butt on the bike, and I don't know how I am going to be able to do this run!"

I basically walked/shuffled the first couple miles trying to stretch here and there. The run course was also very hilly, and there was no way I could run up the hills. I managed to run the rest of the way, walking up the hills. It was a long 13.1 miles but thinking of my grandmother who is battling cancer is what got me through it.

The last mile was downhill, which wasn't fun on cramping legs. As I approached the finish line, the first people I saw were two girls from my work. One was doing the Olympic Race the next day. They didn't recognize me at first because I looked like I had been in a battle with a drooling dragon and it won. I crossed the finish line with a total time of 7 hours and 23 minutes with my family and friends there to greet me. I then soaked in the cold lake water with a beer in my hand.