

2005 ITU World Championships

Nobody can resist the lure of the Hawaii Islands. From the tropical breezes and sandy beaches to the hula dancers and luau dining. Oh yeah, don't forget the 1.5K swim/40K bike/10K run either. That was another draw to triathletes around the globe this October for the 2005 World Championships. Around 2,500 athletes in all traveled to the USA's 50th state to compete in the largest world championship event to date.

The activities began on Tuesday with the Aquathlon World Championships which was open to anyone registered for the Tri-world's. This consisted of a 2.5K run/750m swim/2.5K run in and around Kapiolani Park in Waikiki. Tony Chan took advantage of his time away from work to participate in this fast and furious event. The US had a good showing in this with 1st overall in the women's race and 2nd overall in the men's race.

Then, on Thursday evening the official opening ceremony took place. All athletes gathered in front of the "Duke" statue on Kalakaua Ave in front of famed Waikiki beach. Walking in front of the main strip of beach hotels, many people lined the streets to cheer on the athletes of over 30 countries. After arriving at "The Shell" in Kapiolani Park and sitting through a short ceremony we were treated to a pasta dinner. Now, I must say that I was considering going out to grab a bite at a local restaurant. We've all been to our share of "Pre-race Pasta Dinners" which are usually less than four star (that is if they get any stars at all!), and here we had 2,500 athletes to feed with the US being last in line. However, I stuck it out and was surprised not only at the quality of the meal but also the speed in getting everyone fed. Besides the standard spaghetti were fresh vegetables, fresh pineapple, terriyaki chicken, cake and more.

As we had arrived plenty early for the big race, there was ample time to check out the course in advance. The swim was going to be two laps along Queen's Beach. There wasn't any surf to break through really as the waves broke pretty far off shore, however, the entire way we found we'd be in some rolling waters with a fair current. As wetsuits were not allowed, it was my prediction that it would be a slow swim. The 40K bike course was mostly flat and followed the coast for the most part out to Hawaii Kai. With one small climb as we rode around Diamond Head Crater and another steeper climb just before the turn around the main contender for cyclists was sure to be the strong head winds on the way out. Finally, the run was a two loop course around Kapiolani park which was flat and possibly fast.

We couldn't have asked for a more beautiful day on Sunday as the race began. It was bright but with some clouds in the sky, the water seemed a little calmer, and the breeze hadn't really picked up to it's full steam yet. After seeing 5 waves go off before me it was finally time for the 35-39 age group to prepare for our deep water start. As the gun went off I found a frenzy of swimmers reminiscent of the start of an Ironman race. While I'm pretty comfortable bumping into others in the water, it was quite a while before I could get in the rhythm of swimming. Then, as I came out of the water people started cheering for me by a name I'd be known as for the next couple of hours: "Go USA." A sounding out of spectators to the athletes that I know motivated us!

Although there was quite a bit of drafting along the bike course, it seemed a fast and fun course. Complete with nice views of the ocean around Diamond Head, there was a pleasant feel in the air which continued on through the run. People were lining a large portion of the run course giving added motivation calling out to athletes of all nations. One of these was Laura Clarke-Steffen (not racing due to injury), who staked out opportune places to cheer for husband Bob during the race. Luckily I'd started in an earlier wave as the heat and humidity started to add up on later participants running around the park such as Tony Chan who states he felt it.

Unfortunately I don't think I was at the top of my game for this race, but at the end of the day I felt I'd given the race my all. It felt good to be competing as a part of "Team USA" for the day which makes this race something special in my memory.

PTC Member Results:

Mark Mattern 2:12:20 67/132 35-39 age group

Tony Chan 2:19:57 24/109 50-54 age group

Bob Steffen 3:15:29 48/53 age group

Winning Times:

Male: Diogo Martina (BRA) 1:55:37

Female: Margaret Shapiro (USA) 2:07:10