



Ironman Brazil

By Scott Perrine

Brazil.... A great Country to visit and a great Ironman to race. Definitely something to add to your "places to go/things to do" list.

We left Phoenix on Tuesday May 26th and 22 hours (and four airports later) we arrived in Florianopolis, Brazil. We should have known how the race was going to go by the way the trip started, turbulence all the way from Phoenix to Houston and than again from Houston to Miami. We were actually placed into a holding pattern over Miami for about 45 minutes due to the weather, it was like two long roller coaster rides. A brief four hour lay over in Miami and than we were off to Sao Paulo on TAM airlines (TAM is a GREAT airlines that offers all the perks airlines used to offer. Made it through customs and than a short one hour flight into Florianopolis.

Ken Glah's Endurance Sports Travel team were waiting at the airport to shuttle us to our hotel. I can not say enough about Ken and his team, they truly understand customer service and go above and beyond with all aspects of your trip, and most importantly they ensure your family is well taken care of and has plenty to do while you are tied up with all the pre race activities and responsibilities.

Wednesday was a rainy day and we spent most of it unpacking, putting the bike together, getting to know our surroundings, etc. Around 4PM that afternoon I was able to get out for a one hour bike ride. I explored part of the run course while trying to become comfortable with the narrow streets and Brazilian drivers. I quickly learned that traditional Motor Vehicle Laws in Brazil are not truly followed, more guidelines than actual laws.

Thursday morning was another light rain day. I tested the waters early that morning with a 30 minute swim. The water was approximately 70 degrees, clear, and calm. Some of the nicest water I have swam in in quite some time. There were even dolphins swimming around, they never swam close to me but they were always near where I could see them. After the swim I met up with Chantelle and the kids and we all had a great Brazilian breakfast. Brazilian breakfast is a lot like eating at Starbucks - really strong coffee, juices, fresh fruit, and a large assortments of breads and cakes. After Breakfast I was off to the Ironman City for race registration and athletes meeting and Chantelle and the kids were off on an Island Beach Tour and Sand Boarding.

Friday and Saturday were more of the same... rain and race preparation. Chantelle and the kids rented a car and continued to explore the Florianopolis area.

Sunday and Race Day:

I awoke at 3 am for the traditional race day preparation (early breakfast). I immediately checked outside and saw stars in the sky (cool, no rain), but then I looked down at the beach and the ocean and noticed something much worse than rain... whitecaps on the water and the trees blowing like crazy. The Irongod of Wind had arrived for race day. Fortunately the last two months of training have had some serious wind days and I was prepared, no distracting my focus today.

The cannon went off right at seven and into the water we went (no countdown, just a cannon and go... glad I was watching the time). It was like trying to get through the breakers at Malibu, just crazy. I was taking strokes and grabbing nothing, the swells were that large in places. I was swallowing water like crazy, not trying to mind you just caught in the middle of the lead pack and could not get clean water to swim/breathe/etc. We made it around the first turn buoy and headed for the second. Everytime I looked up and sighted I was to the left of the buoy and could not figure out what the heck was going on until the entire pack stopped and we all realized they were pulling the buoy back out to where it should be... great, an additional 500 meters. Most swims have large turn buoy's and smaller sighting buoys, but in Brazil they just use the large turn buoys and with the rough water sighting was very difficult. Made it out of the water around 1:11 (I still have not looked at my final time) and was quite satisfied with that given the conditions.

The bike was executed according to plan. Stayed focused on the wattage, relaxed on the up hills, pushed it on the downs, maintained on the flats. Grasky will be quite happy, I did everything as he had outlined, got passed like crazy on the up hills, passed the same people and then some on the down hills... it was GREAT!. I kept telling myself stick to the plan and I was.

Start of the second loop the rain came back and we had 56 miles of cold, wet rain. This didn't bother me and I kept moving. Unfortunately 2/3 into the bike and my stomach decided to evacuate itself. I am sure it was the salt water, I could not keep any of my nutrition down after this. I switched to just water for about 30 minutes until things settled down and then ate pieces of a powerbar, this seemed to work. Towards the end of the bike I tried my Infinit Nutrition again... not good, it all came back.

So I hit the run with legs but no stomach. I made it through the first 11 mile before additional stomach issues (but very little nutrition). The remainder of the run consisted of run/puke/walk/repeat. It is very frustrating to have had the legs wanting to run but not the stomach wanting to cooperate. As I sat at breakfast the day after I heard everyone complaining of similar issues so I am glad it wasn't just me.

I'll be back one day to claim redemption (heck, my Brazilian Visa is good for five years). Until then I will focus on races in the US and see if I can chase that ever eluding Kona Slot.

A few things about IM Brazil:

Good:

Race director/Latin Sports - They know what they are doing and put on a great show.

Endurance Sports Travel - Ken and his team understand what the athlete and the athlete's family needs. All details are covered.

TAM Airlines - I wish we had service like that on a daily basis in the US.

Race Officials - 40 draft Marshalls on the course equaled zero draft issues. The WTC should take note!

Finish Line support - I was in the massage tent within five minutes of crossing the finish line.

Security - they take your picture at packet pickup and then verify your identity everywhere (race check in, bike pick up, finisher gear, etc.)

Bad:

IronGod of Wind... she sucks (or blows). She always shows up when I race :-)

Swim Course - they really need sighting buoys.

Race Bandits - the roads are not always closed for racing in Brazil so when they are shut down a lot of the locals come out and ride the course. The officials cannot do anything about it.

Lighting - they do not light up the race course after hours and do not require any type of reflective material. Given the fact that it is fall in Brazil the sun sets early.

Interesting:

Run aid stations - Water, Gatorade, Pepsi, Bread, Cake, and beef sticks.

Brazilian Breakfast - Starbucks on steroids... and cake.

My Son Brian - apparently he takes after his old man... talked his way into all the press booths on the course for some really great pictures. When challenged for credentials he just told them he was with the PTC and flashed his Endurance Sports Travel bracelet (no questions asked after that).

Beautiful:

The Country

The People

The language

The Experience