

Tucson Triathlon Report

By Toru Kawana

Anticipation of the race was growing on what was the hottest day of the year as we drove on I-10 toward Tucson on Saturday, March 20th. The thermometer in my truck showed 100 degrees. Since I have lived in the Valley for 13 years, I am used to training in heat, but not racing in 100 degrees so early in the year. However, on race morning (after sleeping only 4 hours due to loud neighbors at the hotel), I noticed a cloud was hanging over Tucson. This cloud cover made me think "It's going to be a great day."

"Look at the flag," shouted my wife Donna as we arrived at the University of Arizona. The flag was outstretched in the 20 mph NE wind. I thought to myself, "I hate to race on a windy day." But I didn't say it because I didn't want to scare my 15 year old daughter Kiyomi who was also racing. So, I kept repeating to myself, "Think positively!"

As I came out of the pool, I thought I had finished the 825 yd swim in 13 minutes. But as I looked again the clock said 15 minutes which was more than 1 minute slower than my time in 2002. Because I felt good during the swim and had spent more time training I thought I was faster.

On the bike I was dashing down Broadway at 30 mph thanks to the tail wind. All too soon though, my speed slowed to 15 mph as I climbed a tiny hill on Speedway into the wind. I told myself, "Think positively!" Tucking in on the aero bars, I pretended to be Lance Armstrong during the Tour de France time trial . . . But my speedometer didn't show it.

During the run I felt better than usual. I've spent more time running than I have the last few seasons. But halfway through the run, both my feet felt like they were burning. I was getting blisters. I said to myself over and over, "Think positively!" I kept running, pretending to be a tiger hunting for prey.

As I approached the finish line, I saw Kiyomi (who started in a later wave) beginning the run. She was smiling . . . It was a good sign. You ask why my daughter started later than I did? It's because she is a much better swimmer than I. I found that she lapped twice an out-of-town swim coach sharing her lane. Kiyomi finished her swim in 11 minutes.

After crossing the finish line in 1:19, I swallowed two bagels and backtracked the course to find Kiyomi. When I found her at 1 mile to go she was still smiling. She shouted, "I haven't walked yet!" I said to myself that when I was her age I couldn't even run a mile. One quarter mile from the finish she said, "I can do it by myself. You don't have to run with me." My baby is growing up I thought. I took a shortcut to the finish line to see her finish. Her time was 1:29 which was good enough for 3rd place in the 15-17 age group.

Every time I race, I think triathlons are like life. When we are in it, it can be hard. But we have to think positively and keep on going. Train hard and prosper!