

USAT National Age Group Championships 2005

The "Road" to the 2005 World Championships started off in a cloud of frustration, angst and a feeling of being let down for the 1200 athletes who initially showed up in the Crossroads of America, Kansas City. It was August when we flew into the home of Hallmark Cards, and the heartland which included Kansas had been in a drought for many months. All the corn fields had shriveled without a drop of rain and the local farmers were all preparing themselves for some hard times. None the less, the local residents were proud to show off their home to the nations triathletes who had been training all year for a shot at Team USA and a spot to the World Championships.

Those who came to test themselves did so for all different reasons. Bob and Laura Steffen simply viewed it as an opportunity to visit family in the area and get in a fun race at the same time. I spoke to people from Pennsylvania who were determined to qualify for the worlds, and I spoke to people from nearby Lawrence Kansas who just wanted to do a race and this was local for them. Personally I had dual motivations. On one hand I just wanted to test myself against a highly competitive field and see how well I could do. I knew that I had been training hard and was in good shape, but I also knew there were many others across the states doing the same. On the other hand my wife, Kristi, had mentioned wanting to go to Hawaii in the fall - and what do you know, that happened to be when and where the World Championships were going to be. So, with great anticipation I packed up and headed to Kansas City with Tony Chan - who had already qualified for the Duathlon Short Course World Championships and wanted to do the same for triathlon.

Most of us are familiar with the TV show Gilligan's Island, and I would wager that most know the lyrics to the theme song which start out "The weather started getting rough . . ." Well, that's exactly what happened while we prepared ourselves for this "A" race on everyone's calendar. It had been overcast with scattered showers in the couple of days leading up to the race, but then on Sunday the clouds opened up and let the rain come down with a fury like a raging bull on the streets of Spain. At first the race was "postponed" for 15 minutes, then 30 minutes as the 1200 would be competitors huddled under tents and awnings shivering and wet as the rain came down in sheets making it difficult to even see up the road.

In the end there was no race, only chilled athletes pushing out cars stuck in 6 inches of mud. Understanding the reason behind the cancelled race we went back to our hotels with what I'd best describe as an "empty" feeling. We all wanted to challenge ourselves and "earn" a spot to World's. With no other way of deciding who should go, USAT and ITU determined that anyone who had shown up to race in Kansas City would get an invitation to Hawaii.