

XTERRA Lake Tahoe: National Championships by Brian Grasky

Rebecca Tschider, Kevin Flynn, Debi Brokke and Brian Grasky traveled to Lake Tahoe, NV, for Xterra USA, the National Championships for that format. We showed up early to preride the course and were met with beautiful weather, but soon the temperatures dropped and the winds picked up. Kevin raced the day prior in Xterra Nevada and had a great race, taking time off last year despite 5 foot swells in the water and feeling a bit toasted from his outstanding performance in Malibu.

As the temperature slowly rose from 28 degrees on race morning we set up our transition area and prayed for warmth. The gun went off at 9:00 when the sun finally tried to peak through the clouds and the mercury read around 43. All 300 athletes dove into the 58 degree, but beautiful, Lake Tahoe while the winds produced 4-5 foot swells--a few of them white-capped. It was going to be a long swim. The hardest part of the swim was talking yourself into getting back in the cold water after the 100 meter beach run. The swim was slower than normal for us, but that was understandable with the weather.

Exiting the water with numb feet is always a trick, but here we had a rather long 600 meter run to T1. The temp was almost 50 degrees by now, but the wind was about 15-20 mph. The course started at 6400 feet, then ascended a steady 1600 foot climb in 3.5 miles on a sandy dirt road. As your lungs began to burst, we traversed the contour of the mountain along the world famous Flume Trail for 4.5 miles. If we weren't threatened with a 1500 foot plunge into the cold lake, we would have enjoyed the amazing view. The trail hit Marlett Lake, then climbed another 1000 feet to the peak. The 800 foot, 6 mile rock single track descent was so much fun we wanted to climb back up just to do it again, but we opted to descend the road back to the start area--albeit mostly out of control--to put on the running shoes. The ride went well for most of us, but Rebecca had the luck of a flat tire on the Flume Trail. With cold-numb hands, wet spandex, and wind chill the flat proved much more of a problem that it should have been. Brian came off the bike among the top 5 amateurs.

The run course meandered through a tree-filled field in town, up and down short hills and in and out of the local stream--literally. Our feet were thawing out by this time, and had feeling again by the second run lap. Debi ran a solid race and placed 7th in her age group, dropping 8 minutes from last year's time. Despite a bruised foot, the flat tire, and a very cold and miserable swim, Rebecca finished well. Brian ran well to come across the line 4th in his age group and 8th amateur overall.

Overall it was a fun race, but the weather took its toll. Did we all learn some lessons about racing in adverse weather? Yes. Did we all learn a bit about ourselves and our ability to overcome adversity? Definitely. And well we be back next year? Absolutely.