



Triple Iron



Goal: Swim 7.2 miles, Bike 336 miles, Run 78.6 miles....and no sleeping.

Where do you begin a story like this? The event itself is one place to start, but there was 9 months of training before that, and then there was the time where the idea took root and infected my brain, which was nearly a year before that. I guess it started the second I finished the Double, three years ago. Someone asked me when the triple would be, and of course I dismissed that, but in the far, dark recesses of my brain; those places where you are scared to admit exist because the few times you've acknowledged it's presence you got in some big trouble, I knew the plan awaited. Like one little yeast that found a pile of sugar, the potion began to brew. But I let it fester and grow for a long, long while before I even spoke the words aloud. So, nearly a year before the start day, I mentioned it to Mary, who looked at me like I'd lost my mind. The topic was dropped, until a few weeks before New Years and I made mention that Triple Ironman training would start at the beginning of the year. 2016 would be a long year.

The training for a triple ironman isn't something you can just Google and find a lot of information about. Since 2005, less than 100 people have finished one of these, so there isn't loads of resources to draw on here. The few training plans I found were very different in the amount of training they wanted you to do. I even ended up making contact with a guy on FB who has done a triple and even a quad before. He sent me his stuff as well, but it was just as different as the others were. In the end, I mashed them all together and then came up with my own plan. I've done ultras, and a double, so I thought I had a good feel for what would work. At least it was a plan. So, for 9 months I increased my swimming, biking and running. I even made some adjustments to the plan that made sense. It all felt right. The only thing you fear during training for something this big is getting injured in some way that totally throws off your training. Kinda like biking in Central Park New York and having a fall that breaks some ribs. Luckily, that only slowed down my lifting workouts, and not my actual training, although sleeping was a chore for the next few months. But overall, nothing threw off the plan. I was more relaxed about missing some days than the last time, and although I missed plenty of time at home, I tried to make sure I was around for the important stuff. I think I accomplished that, but Mary is the reason it worked, and she'd be the one to tell you if I actually pulled it off. When you are gone almost every weekend biking and running, it takes a toll, so for anyone contemplating such a task, keep that in mind. There's more to this than training. Life will suffer, and you better have a strong foundation or the shit is gonna come crashing down eventually. I keep hearing "you're a

machine”, and nothing could be further from the truth. Machines don’t feel guilt leaving their families at 4am to go for bike rides that start before sun-up and finish in the dark. Machines don’t dread pulling themselves out of bed every weekend for months on end to get some workout in, then have to go to work, and know that in a few hours, you have to do it all over again. I’m not a machine. I got pains, I felt guilt, I hated it sometimes, but I know a giant goal comes with big sacrifices. Communication with your family is the key, and we’ve got that down pretty good. The event itself is just the icing on a very large cake. But it’s what I do. It’s what I HAVE to do. Ever since I can remember, I had to push the limits. Can I walk a fence to the end? How high could I jump off of something? How long can I hold my breath. Later, I kept pushing my limits and if there was something that would get my adrenaline exploding, then I had a new reason to get out of bed. Skydiving. BASE jumping. But finally I found another way to test myself. Now it was seeing how far I could push myself physically, and then mentally. Marathons started the next chapter, but soon, they lost their appeal as a challenge. Triathlons, then Ironmans, but after you do events like these several times, even they lose their appeal as a real challenge. I put my toe into the “ultra” pool, and eventually found myself running 100 miles, then a Double Ironman, then harder 100s. I seemed to be on a quest to find a personal physical or mental breaking point. Why though? I still don’t know, but what I do know is that if I get off this train, there better be something waiting for me at the Depot. Mt. Everest is too expensive. I’m pretty sure NASA isn’t looking for retired, thrill seeking cops to pop up to the space station. So that leaves me with a Triple Ironman.

GAME DAY:

Just like I did for the Double, I asked my friends to help me pull this off as well. I needed people to swim with, bike with, and run with. I also needed people to crew for me. This is asking your friends to make a huge commitment, and I knew I was again asking a great deal from them. I set up a spreadsheet and the names began to fill in. I was still filling that thing out the night before the start, but it all came together in the end. I’d have people swimming, biking and running with me the entire time, and on top of that, others would man the transition camp to watch the gear and prepare food, drink and equipment for the times I came back.

Up at 3:15am after a terrible night of sleep, but this is pretty normal for doing something like this. So many details were flying around in my head, it was hard to shut all of that down. The important night of sleeping is 2 days before an event, and I slept well that night, so all should be good. I had prepacked the car the night before, so all I had left to

do was throw the bikes on the car rack and have breakfast. A big bowl of oatmeal with cinnamon, honey and cranberries was the meal of choice, washed down with some orange juice. I was going to hold off on any caffeine until it was an absolute necessity. Mary got up and wished me luck. I'd see her later in the day after she got off work.

I drove to Silver Lake Swim Club and arrived 20 minutes before they opened at 5am. I was the only one in the parking lot, and it gave me a few minutes to get my bike ready and pull out my bag. The girl opening the facility, Mariah, thankfully came early and let me in at 4:45. I threw my bag in front of the lane I wanted to swim in, and set up my bike by the front door. Now all I needed was Perry to show up and the clock to hit 5am. I was feeling a bit antsy. So many details to make this thing happen, but now it was out of my hands. I had placed the event in motion, and now I had to hope it all fell into place. In the end, I told myself it was swimming, biking and running....relax.

Moments before 5am Mel and Perry showed up. Mel had an envelope for me, and as I sat on the edge of the pool, I opened it to find that she was going to sponsor my event! She threw in a little money and a nice letter, so now it was official, I WAS A SPONSORED ATHLETE! Hahahahahaha! Mel knows the importance of these little gestures during times like this. Perry jumped in the pool, I hit my watch, turned on my music and at 5:01am, the show was on the road. Perry asked what pace I wanted, and



I said 2:15, and that's exactly what he gave me. For the next hour, Perry plowed ahead of me, pushing the water ahead and letting me just relax and enjoy the draft. We'd stop every 40 laps for a quick bite, and about every 80 for me to jump out and go to the bathroom. His pace was perfect and before I knew it, an hour had gone by and Peggy was ready to take his place. Mel hit the road as well, but I'd see her later for crewing and running. Peggy swam on and off with me for the next few

hours, and must have done at least a double ironman's worth of swimming herself. Somewhere in there, Erin Webb brought an entire box of Servatii's donuts, so I tossed my pop tart nutrition in favor of yummy donuts! Steve showed up next, and I realized that time was flying by. Having different people with me was making this much easier than any of my training swims. The most I had ever done was 3 hours, and I knew I

was looking at about 5 hours this morning. I was depending on my friends to help me the last 2 hours, and so far, it was turning out better than I could have imagined. While Steve gave me a great pace, Peggy actually swam in the lane next to us, and now and then the two of them would switch out. The music was playing, my friends were pulling me along and the time and laps were flying by. Nothing was hurting and I was just plodding along at my slow but consistent pace. I never let my mind drift off to much. Although my watch was counting my laps, I also kept a mental tab of each lap as well, then confirmed it with my watch. Next up was Scott. Peggy and Steve had done an awesome job, and now Scott was there to pull me closer to the end. I was giving Scott some instructions, but he just told me to get swimming. He added some levity to his swim, and that was great timing. He reminded me that I needed to keep my sense of humor for this thing. Now and then I'd catch him doing the back stroke, and that made me laugh. I saw Jennifer and Karen show up to keep Erin company on the pool deck. Karen was going to drive my car to the transition area, and Jennifer was going to drive her back. The plan was falling into place just fine. Before I knew it, I had 26 laps to go, and Scott hopped out and Luke took his place. Luke gave me some laps, and finally Scott jumped back in to take his spot and take me to the finish line. And then it was done. 506 laps completed. I did a little hand stand at the end and got out of the pool. It turned out to be much easier than I ever anticipated, and the time went by much faster than I believed possible. 4 hours, 55 minutes. Having my friends let me draft behind them made up the difference in my training. The plan seemed to be working. Off to the locker room to get the biking gear on.

BIKING:

I took my time in the locker room. The key was to lube up early and often. There were 336 miles staring at me, and I didn't want to get off the bike with such bad saddle sores that it would make the run harder than it was already going to be. Just like a regular ironman, what I did on the bike would determine what would happen on the run, at least from a physical standpoint. The mental part was uncharted territory. While I had been swimming, it had been raining outside, and I'm glad no one told me that. Biking in the rain was always a possibility, but not something I wanted to experience during this event. It was only in the high 50s. I overdressed a bit, putting on a long sleeve under my jersey, and adding a buff around my neck. I do better a bit warm than a bit cold. The bike was waiting for me in the lobby, ready to rock. Out front, Scott waited on with his bike, as well as Karen, Jennifer and Erin. Scott and I took a few pictures and got on our way. We would bike up to Newtown, where our transition shelter was at the Little Miami Golf Center. I had gone to the golf center in the Spring to set this up. The

manager of the facility thought I was nuts, but he agreed to let me use the shelter for a few days, as well as alert the Park Rangers so they would know we would be there after hours.



The ride from Erlanger to Newtown was something I was looking forward to, and was going to miss at the same time. This would be the only “scenic” part of the ride, since I was just doing several *out and backs* after I arrived at the shelter. We had a great, long downhill going into Covington, and I yelled to Scott that it’s too bad this would be the only downhill I’d see for a long time. I enjoyed the few minutes of “free speed”, and knew this was all I was going to get. From here on out, nothing was free. Scott stopped on the Purple People Bridge for a quick picture, and then we continued on. We biked up to Lunken, around the airport, and then through Otto Armleder. This little leg was a reminder of the Double I did 3 years ago, since this is where I biked that entire time. I was glad I had found a new venue this time. I knew it would get repetitive eventually, but at least not for a while. 26 miles later we showed up at the shelter. Karen had transported my vehicle with my gear and extra bike on it, and Jennifer was there to drive her back to Erlanger. Matt was my first CREW and he was ready to rock! So far, so good!

The order of the day was pizza. I told Matt to order pizza, and to tell his relief crew mate to continue doing the same. I would eat pizza during the bike portion for as long as LaRosas would deliver it. We said our goodbyes and Scott and I hit the bike path for our first “out and back”. The trail was wet from the earlier rain, and the leaves had begun to fall, so we were greeted with a full on FALL experience. Unfortunately, all of the leaves and muck from the trail was thrown all over our bikes as well, and while it didn’t hamper our progress, it coated our rides with debris. I’d also get a face full of water if I tried to stay too close to the back of Scott’s back tire, which was supposed to be one of the reasons he was riding with me. The longest ride I had trained with up to this point was 220 miles. That’s a long way from the 336 I was going after here. I had been banking on DRAFTING the person in front of me to get me to the end. While biking, the biggest obstacle to overcome is the air that pushes against you as you move forward.



Time for a burger and some laughs. Serious helmet hair!

The idea with drafting is to let the person in front do all of the wind breaking (insert fart joke), and the guy behind is doing a lot less work. When the ground is wet, you end up being sprayed by the front guy, which was what was happening this morning. There was a detour. About 3 weeks prior, a bridge at the 4.5 mile mark developed a sink hole. The bridge was shut down, and for a few days it looked like a major revision of my course was going to need to take place. I drove out to the site one day after work to get a first hand look. I parked in a little pull off area off the road, near the bike path, and climbed a tree and root covered hillside, up to the bike path. I leaped the fence and walked a few hundred yards to the bridge in question. Sure enough, there was a temporary fence erected across the bridge, but there was also a small rock path to the right that had apparently just been made, so I walked down the path to the roadway. A road crew was there setting up barrels and working on a driveway next to the bike path. I asked one of the workers when the path was going to be repaired, and he said it would be a month or two. CRAP! But then he said that they were in the process of blacktopping the driveway of this house so bikers could use it to go around the bridge as a temporary detour. YEA! This looked like it was gonna work, and I wasn't going to have to reroute my course after all. Whew! So Scott and I came to the bridge, detoured off to the left, down the driveway hill, onto the road, up the hill, on to the gravel path, and back to the bike path. All I had to hope for was that me or my friends didn't get flats on this little gravel area. As we approached Loveland, I decided to shorten the ride. Going through Loveland is a chore. There are several streets to cross and you have to slow down to get around all of the people who use that area to access the trail. I decided to turn

around just before hitting downtown, and that's the course we used for most of the rest of the bike portion.

Peggy was my next rider, and we did the same course. We chit chatted as we biked, and although the skies were dark, the weather behaved and we did our out and back fine. Well, except when we got back to the guys driveway to go back up, he was standing in the middle of our path and told us we should walk up the hill because others were having accidents. We blew past him without any words. We didn't have time for walking. Later dude! We made it back without any problems. Stephen was next. He was going to do his first Ironman in Louisville next week, and he had brought his beautiful, white, Cervelo. I felt bad because this thing was gonna get trashed on this wet, rocky course. I told him of the impending doom, but he blew it off. We did out and backs without any problems. So far, so good! Emily and Andrew came out for some quick rides as darkness began to devour the day. Steve was next, and we had no problems except for the man who owns the detour house. As we went down his driveway, he began yelling at us that, "It's closed...IT'S closed..I'TS CLOSED!!!", but we just kept trucking. We'd have to be sneakier on the way back later. When we passed through again, we were in ninja mode, and didn't hear a peep. We made it back to the shelter find. 11pm came, and some snafu happened that left me by myself, but I was fine. Nothing was hurting and I seemed to be mentally good, so I took off by myself for the next out and back. It was completely uneventful, but I realized how nice it was to have someone with me and looked forward to my next rider.

Dianna was ready to rock when I returned and I was so happy. She's new to biking, but took to it fast, and turned out to be strong. She took her duties to heart and gave me a good pace to draft off. I reminded her of our upcoming detour, and the man that might yell at us, but we zipped through with no problem. A little further up the trail, we heard a woman's voice off to the left of the trail yelling, "HELP ME!". Dianna got a little freaked, but I told her my "freaked out" meter pegged a bit differently after being a cop for so many years. If she still needed our help on the way back, we might investigate, but for now, no Scooby Doo adventures. All was quiet on the return trip. No yells for help, no yells from "detour man".

The SMITH'S were my next team of biking buds. Luke and Jenn gave me good company on this leg, and we traded some stories, which made the time pass. Again, no yells from anyone. Everything seemed to be progressing fine. I still had mental alertness and physically nothing was hurting. I was being very proactive with putting Icy Hot on places that had ever given me trouble in the past. I was also proactively taking ibuprofen to keep possible future problems at bay.



The crew and riders taking a sec to talk.

Mark and Bill were my next crew at 5am. Now I had been at this for 24 hours, and so far so good. Less than a mile from taking off, my bike felt weird so we stopped. My first flat tire. It was bound to happen eventually to someone. We happened to be next to a spur that took you off the trail and to the bike shop parking lot, which was well lit. Between the three of us, we changed the tire fairly quickly and off we went. All was well for a bit, but then it was Mark's turn to get a flat. This one turned out to be a bit of a struggle, as we went through all of our CO2s to get his tire properly inflated. If something went wrong now, he still had a small hand pump. It's good to have a backup plan.....and eventually we were blessed with another flat. Mark got his second flat, but thankfully we were just a few hundred yards from the shelter. He told us to go on and he would walk it in. Back at the shelter, the sun was just coming up. I had some "breakfast", and restocked my saddle bag with another tube and more CO2s.

The crews were coming and going, and everyone seemed to be having a good time. The mood at the shelter seemed very upbeat every time I found my way back. I was being taken care of extraordinarily well. Each crew member that showed up took their responsibility of keeping me alive and moving very seriously. Drinks were filled. Food was handed to me, and they always asked what more did I need or want. I was moved by how awesome my friends were. They were here to help someone achieve a personal goal. Not to get a medal. Not to win something or even be recognized by any organization in any way. Just to help a friend. That is some powerful stuff there, and it wasn't lost on me for one second. At the same time, smiles were everywhere. This was fun, and that's what I hoped would happen.

Adam came out to help me finish this up. We did a short out and back to be at the shelter when Steve showed back up. He was there for another round, which he said would be good Bourbon Chase training! The miles were flying by, and I was happy that I'd be off the bike soon. I kept checking in on myself to see if anything was hurting, and nothing was. I made sure to keep our speed low. After this many miles, I didn't want to screw this up at the end and not be able to run. At 11am, I hit a milestone. I'd now been "working out" for 30 hours, which was longer than the Double and my longest 100 miler. This was uncharted territory. What was stranger was that I was feeling just peachy. The other times I'd worked out this long, I was toasted by now, but for whatever reason, I was right as rain. I have no explanation, but was extremely happy about it. That was good news, as I had a few miles left to bike and a LOT of miles left to run. On the last long ride out, Adam and I went through Loveland and beyond. I wanted to get as many miles done as possible before going back again. Somewhere out there I got one more flat tire, but that didn't slow us down much, and was fine. The constant "out and backs" were getting old, and the more time I spent at the transition shelter, the longer this was taking. Adam and I pulled into the transition shelter at 1:08pm, 26 hours and 51 minutes after getting on the bike. 336 miles. That would be the distance from the Ohio River in Cincinnati to Chattanooga Tennessee along I-75. That would have been a cool route to take! On the flip side, this took longer than I expected, which was probably due to the longer transition stops. However, I felt great, and if that's what it took to get me this far and feeling this good, then it was worth the extra time. TIME TO RUN!

THE RUN

I put on my regular street shoes to walk to the golf center to change into my running clothes. I was walking a bit funny, but that was to be expected after biking for so long. I'd expect that to go away in the next 30 minutes or so. At the same time, I kept doing a mini checklist on myself. Did anything hurt? Nope. Was I thinking clearly? Hmmmm. I felt my mental game was at about 80%, which wasn't too bad. I didn't feel sleepy, or overly run down, so I was happy about that. I got into the bathroom and took my time getting dressed. More icy hot, lots of lube, calf socks. I was being as proactive as possible. My arms near my shoulders felt tired, which had never happened before, but I chalked that up to never having ridden 336 miles before either. Maybe my training was better than I thought.

As I came out and walked to the shelter, the skies looked angry. There were black clouds mixed with white ones and little glimpses of blue sky. Weird. Mel, Steph and Em were my first crew and off we went. I felt really.....REALLY good, so we ran for a half mile straight. My smart friends reminded me that my plan was to do a "run/walk"

and that we should stick to that plan, so we slowed to a walk. I decided we would do a 2 minute walk and a 5 minute run and see how long I could keep that up. And then the



(Dark Skies greeted us as we started the run. Ugh!)

rain started. Big rain. Forest Gump in Vietnam ran. That would have been ok, but it was also slightly chilly out, and I didn't want to start this trek being wet AND cold, so we decided to turn back and get different clothing on me. Half way back, the rain stopped, but the damage was done. We got back to the shelter and I put on a dry shirt and debated on a rain jacket. Mary had looked at the radar and decided the rain was gone, so I ditched the jacket idea and just put on another shirt. If the shit hit the fan, I'd be back in 6 miles and we'd deal with it, so off we went again.

We continued the 2 and 5 walk run, and that seemed very agreeable. The pace ended up being good and nothing hurt, so don't mess with success. At the 3 mile turnaround, we erected a funny little post next to the fence to signify that spot for the rest of the run. A water bottle, and 3 different sized sticks/branches were leaned against the fence. It broke up the run, and it would be some little funny thing to look forward to for the next several hours. Back we went. All went well. I let the girls talk and didn't say to much. I

just wanted to zone out and let other people tell their stories. That was easier. I'm not going to go into detail about every out and back I did, because for the most part it wasn't overly exciting. I'd go back, eat, pick up a new crew, and head back out. There certainly were some highlights though. I had mentioned my arms were feeling sore from riding, and while I was running/walking, Shari massaged my arms, which is no small feat while in motion. Mel put in what felt like 300 miles of her own. As I think back, it seems like Mel was there nearly all of the run. As the day went on, I noticed that "physically" I really felt fine, which was awesome but weird. However, I knew my mental capacities were slowly sliding down the hill, just a few percent every few hours. How could that not be expected? But I also knew that when it got dark out, things had the potential to go badly much more quickly. Oh well. I'd cross that bridge when it arrived. I wasn't eating enough, and I knew it. I wasn't hungry, and nothing sounded appealing. I voiced this concern and told my pacers to make sure I started using more "gu" more often. GU is 20 grams of carbs and 100 calories. If you take 3 an hour you are meeting the supposed requirements of nutrition during an event. I was well under this benchmark. I tried to make up the difference every time I got back to the shelter, but the longer this went, the less I felt like eating....but that didn't last forever.

During the middle of the night, another ultra runner, Jack Corey, showed up out of nowhere. I'd only heard stories about Jack, but never met him. He had come out to do a few laps with me, and it was this kind of serendipity that made me feel like I might get to the end of this thing. Jack can tell a story, and he had plenty of them. So, for the next 2 laps and 3ish hours, I was able to let my mind be entertained by the colorful tellings of Jack. While I was listening about bears, and projectile vomiting, and mind inducing hippos, I realized my mental capacities were now taking a dive like the Hindenburg. I was going down, and it wasn't gonna be pretty. Physically, I seemed to be fine. Nothing hurt. But there was something that didn't want me pushing forward. I don't even know how to put words to this feeling/emotion that I was experiencing for the first time. It was something close to despair. I had just been out there for a really long time, and while I tried not to dwell on it, I knew I had to be out there for a long while yet. I had expected to have something go to shit physically at some point, but to sink this deep mentally was throwing me off. I never seen it coming, and really had no way to draw on a past experience to deal with it. During an out and back with Jack, I finally gave in and told him we had to switch to a 2/4 walk run. I didn't have the mental fortitude to run longer than than at a stretch. Man....what was happening to me?



Hitting that low point

And just like Jack showing up at the right time, so did the next people. I was about 300 yards from the shelter, when in the distance we see a light bouncing around, and we heard cow bells and “wooping”! As we got closer, someone said it was Pat and Mike, and sure enough, I could make out THE SIGN that was lit up that said GO JIM GO. I got to Pat and just collapsed into a hug. BEST HUG EVER! She was at the right place at the exact right time, and may have just saved me. I was in tears and could barely speak. I eventually let her go and we all jogged into the shelter, where my second well placed savior awaited! Mary was there, and her second hug was the icing on the cake. I just had to take a few moments to hold on to her and let this feeling pass. During our last out and back, Char had snuck out of her house in the middle of the night to put in a lap with us. Before she broke off to go home, she asked if anyone wanted anything, and in a rare moment of being hungry, I offhandedly mentioned “pancakes” sounded good. Welp, Char when home and whipped up a big ole batch of pancakes for everyone! So, when I got back to the shelter, I got all of the medicine I needed. Hugs from wife, pancakes from Char. There was even some coffee from Amy! I sat there, tears in my eyes for reasons I couldn’t even comprehend, and laughing at the same time for not knowing why I was crying. I must have looked crazy as I ate pancakes with tears in my eyes and a weird laugh going on. But whatever the combination was, I bounced off the low point and started a slow mental recovery. I only had about 2 more hours and the sun would be coming up, and that was a point to focus on to keep me moving forward.

Mary and I had an agreement weeks before I started the event. My good friend Jon Minzner.....DOCTOR Jon Minzner, would be there for a good deal of my crewing needs. If Jon ever said I was bad enough not to continue, then there would be no argument or discussion. The plug would be pulled, with no regrets. Jon had arrived on Saturday afternoon, and was going to stay until I finished. He made sure all of the crewing needs were met like clockwork, and manned the station to the end. It was a ace up the sleeve always knowing that Jon was there in case the shit ever hit the fan. You never

appreciate that seat belt until you need it. He even managed to warm up pancakes and coffee on a charcoal grill!



Mary came along for some of my last laps. Again, the right person at the right time. She saw me through during that transition from dark to morning light, but she's done that for me for the last 25 years now and then. Every once in awhile I'd grab her hand to give me that little extra umph to hold on to. During one lap, her and Mike were with me, and they chatted about trips and traveling. It was one of

those conversations that I could just tune in and out of. At one point we passed a bathroom, and I took a moment to go in and sit down. For just a second, I closed my eyes, and I was instantly dreaming. I knew where I was, and knew I was awake, but I was in a full blown dream. I didn't want this feeling to end, but I knew I had to move. I did my business and as I was washing my hands and putting some water on my face, Mary knocked and started coming in to check on me. Apparently I had taken a bit longer than expected. All good.

Soon the sun came up, and I was a new person. Any darkness that has clouded my mind vanished as the sky changed colors and the great fireball made it's appearance. This was still a mental challenge, but there was no heavy tone to it now. I just had to plug along.

On one of the last out and backs, I was running with Mary and Steph, and Steph kept laughing and laughing. I looked back and she was staring at her phone and cracking up. Needing a laugh, I saddled up next to her and she was taking Snapchat pics of herself and making them look funny. Soooooooooo, she made me a rabbit. It was little moments like this that put just a tad bit more gas in my tank. Steph keeps her sense of humor at about 4th grade level most of the time....which is perfect.



On my last long out and back, I decided a change of scenery was in order. Earlier, Emily, Andrew and I did a little 3 mile out and back on our bikes to a little dead end spur. Now I wanted to take this to give my mind something different to focus on. Paul, Mark, Steph and Mike came along on this bit. I had now taken our run/walk down to a 1/1. It wasn't fast, but it was all I could wrap my brain around for now. I knew this run/walk was killing these guys, but no one complained, and we moved forward.

3.3 miles out, to a dead end, then we turned around. Andrew came back out and rode on his bike next us as his girlfriend, Sara, was getting in a long run. We made it back to the shelter with just less than 4 miles to go. 4. Miles. To. Go. I could barely register this moment in my head. This was actually going to end soon. Off we went, this time with Jeff and Mel again as well. 1.98 miles out, and then back. It was slow, but with every step, it was one less to take. We hit the turn around, and back we came. Down the path and soon we saw the golf course as we crossed the little bridge. The little bridge I'd never have to cross again. The path I'd never run down again. The end was approaching rapidly, and as we came close to the shelter, it was surreal. My friends were there. Filming. Cheering. I came to the little tree at the shelter where we called our starting point, and I stopped running when I saw the distance on my watch. It was over. I was done. 53 hours and 50 minutes later, after covering 421.8 miles, it was actually done. I sat down, and for the first time in a very long time, I didn't HAVE to get back up. I ate. I drank. I shook hands. Mel gave me a gift bag with a bottle of tequila from her husband, a little inside joke. Pictures were taken and I just relaxed for a few minutes. The moment was so big, it wasn't really hitting me. It was just too much to process at once. Too many miles. So many people. The stories. The hours and days. My brain was beyond the ability to package it up and make sense of it all. I knew I couldn't sit very long, or I'd fall asleep, and once that happened, there was little hope of waking me back up. We gave our hugs and said our goodbyes and Mary carted me off to the car to drive me home. Our friends Jeff and Dianna were going to make sure Mary's car arrived home later, and the rest of the crew were going to clean up the mess we'd made of the shelter.

Mary kept trying to talk to me as we drove home, to try to keep me awake. I kept drifting off. It was a fight to not completely just give in to the wonderful sleep that was just a long blink away. Somehow we made it home without me totally going out, and NOW my legs decided it was time for a little, long awaited pain. OUCH! They had totally stiffened up during this short drive home, so getting up to my bedroom was more painful than any of the running and biking I had done for the last 2 days. Really legs?!? I wanted so badly just to fall into the bed, but I had 50+ hours of road crap all over me, and a quick shower was demanded. I don't even remember that shower, but it happened, and I hit the pillow. During the next 21ish hours, Mary woke me up a couple of times with food. Once, it was a full blown breakfast, that I inhaled and loved. Then it was lights out again for an unknown amount of time. I came to again as she gave me a protein shake, then out again. The next morning, she made me a breakfast again before she went to work, and then I was out for a few more hours. Finally, I emerged from the bedroom and went downstairs to become part of life again.

It was during a few quick bathroom trips during my sleep day that I discovered that the upper bottoms of my feet were numb, as well as the tips to a few of my fingers. This

was stuff that I hoped would eventually go away, and over the next 2 weeks, it eventually did. I also noticed the the skin on my back was a bit less sensitive. Weird.

I've been asked, "could you have done this alone"? My first answer is, no. But the point never was to do this alone. I never trained thinking I would do it by myself. In fact, I trained specifically as if there would be lots of people helping me. I know that most of the event would have been lonely and boring and dreary if my friends wouldn't have helped me. Could I have done this "alone". Probably. But it would not have been fun, and I don't need to spend 50+ hours by myself and not have fun doing it. After a tally, I have 37 people to thank for getting me to the end of my triple adventure in one piece. 37 people. That's says volumes to me. 54 hours of people taking time away from their lives, at all times of day and night, to help one guy prove something to himself. I hope my friends got something out of this too. If I could give each of them a medal, I would. They deserve it. The other question I get is, "what's next"? I'm not sure. There needs to be something, but for now, life needs to be caught up on. I need to be a father again, and more than a part time husband. It's time to recharge the batteries, and when it's time to climb into the rocket, I'll know it.

Ye. Ha!



Now a little disclaimer. There were so many of you that came out to help me, and if I didn't mention you by name here, please forgive me. Each and every one of you mean

a lot to me for helping me get through this. I may have only seen you for a few minutes, but you manned the shelter, got me food and drink, and helped me swim, bike and run. I am forever in your debt. I'm a hugger, so you'll get at least that eventually!