



BACKGROUND TO THE NOVEMBER 2025 RACE

When attending the US Navy Postgraduate School in Monterey in 1985, I used to swim at lunch in the outdoor pool. Several of the swimmers told me about this new sport called Triathlon. One guy said "You'd enjoy it". I signed up for the Wildflower Tri in Lake San Antonio in Monterey County where I met the "Scotts" - Dave Scott, Scott Tinley, Scott Molina along with his brother Phil. Scott Tinley won Kona in 1985, Dave Scott won in 1986 & 1987, and Scott Molina won in 1988. It was in the early days of tri, and with a mass start and a right angle turn 50m from shore, it was like the roughest Water Polo game I'd been in. Returning to Canada, I went in the inaugural CF Atlantic Region Tri Champs in 1986. I had a good swim, but my old 10-speed bike was geared wrong and I had to walk it up the hills. I was in last place in the run being followed by the 'bone wagon'. I got a new racing road bike and qualified for the 1991 CF National Tri Champs. After that race, I took 17 years off when the kids were growing up. I got back into tri doing the Victoria Half in 2008. I then tried 5 times from 2013 to 2017 to qualify for Kona. I was close several times, but I always died in the run.

PREPARATION

I decided to sign up for this race while watching my triathlete buddy Mike Pugh compete at Ironman Canada in Ottawa. He won M65-69, but I noticed that times for 70 and over dropped off fast. I searched other results from the past few years and I noticed that completing a full Ironman in less than 14 hours could earn a slot to the World Championships. Having done IMFL twice before, I knew it was my race as there were no hills on the bike or run, with an ocean swim that can be challenging. Through the summer, I was pool swimming 3 times a week, open water 3 times a week, biking 2 times a week and running 4 times a week. I extended my Tuesday run to 20k and did that 6 times before I started tapering down. We flew down to Florida 11 days

before the race start. Every training day started off with an ocean swim followed by a bike or run on the course. Twice, I did swim/bike/run days to get that feeling of running after some previous leg exercise. Knowing that in hot races, I become dehydrated and run out of energy, I focused on keeping hydrated and salt levels up the day before. I consumed Julie's pre-race Italian turkey sausage/noodle dinner. I took Shivot to the big parking lot where I found that I had rock star parking near the Bike Out. He usually has to sleep with Cervelos, but at this race he had to sleep with the Canyons



My goal times:

Swim 1:10

T1:10

Bike: 6:30

T2: 10

Run: 5+ hours

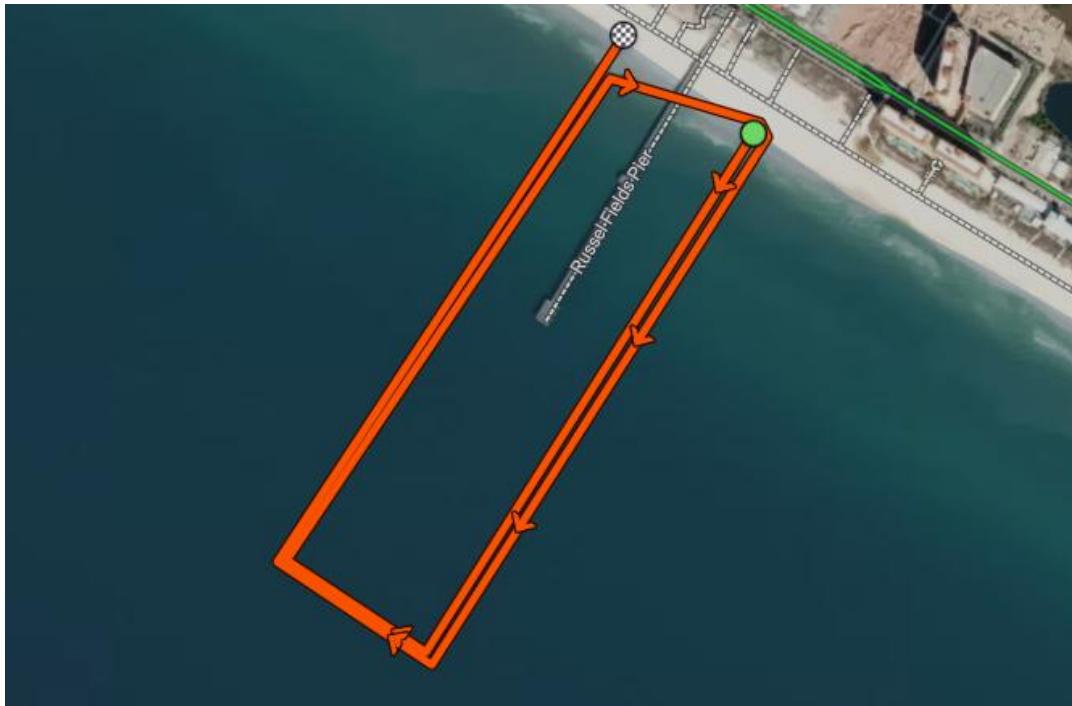
RACE MORNING

I got up at 5:00 and it seemed normal to me – just like a day to go swim with NavyMasters at 6:00. I had my morning coffee and a toasted bagel with peanut butter. Julie and I then walked the 1.7 km to the race site. I put the cold fluids on the bike, chatted with a few racers and then put on my ROKA wetsuit.



THE SWIM

I lined up in the corral in the 1:01-1:10 group for the start with the goal of going no faster than 1:10. It was a rolling start, and they were putting 4 people in the water every 5 seconds.



I decided to

go easy to start as I wanted to keep my HR low. I came out of the water out after lap 1 and saw my time was 34:50 so pace was on target.



Lap 2 was much tougher because the 1:40-1:50 people joined us and they were everywhere. I tried to control my HR thinking about stroke technique and not crossing over with my right arm as I only breathe left. Coming up the beach, my watch showed 1:10 and I felt like I had just completed an easy swim workout. The timing mat was up the beach near the showers and my official time was 1:11:10. It was into the tent for T1 and my official time for the transition showed 10:26.

THE BIKE



Everything worked perfectly on the bike – new 1040 Garmin, power meter, tire inflation at 80 psi on the 28s, shifted nicely, and Clif bars were tasty. I took one bar an hour for the first 3 hours, drank Gatorade and took a salt tablet every half hour. My goal was maintain 28 km/hr while holding 130W on the ride with a cadence of 80. My plan was to keep my HR low so that I would be able to run. At the 90K point, I smiled when I saw my time was 3:14:21 so I was within seconds of being on my goal pace. During the 2nd half of the bike ride, I was taking a gel on the hour and half hour, with a salt tab on the 15s and 45s while drinking Mortal Hydration. I did stop for a pee at about the 4-hour point and it seemed that I was in the potty for 4 minutes! After

getting back to the beach, we headed west into the wind for about 20K and then back to the finish line. My Garmin showed 6:33 as it had paused during my stop, but the official time was 6:37:15 with an average speed of 27.3 km/hour

THE RUN

I started the run feeling hydrated and fed but my legs felt like two telephone poles. That feeling went away in the first km as Jason had relayed to Julie that I was to run no faster than 7:10 pace. I was taking short steps and had the feeling I was on about a 7:30 pace. My Garmin showed 6:26 after the first K so I adjusted the pace to get me to 3K at exactly 21:30. At that point, my HR had shot up to 165 so I took my first of many walks. Every time I ran, my HR pushed up into the danger zone so I just did run-walks. This photo shows me at the 19K point heading to the turnaround.



I turned the Half Marathon at 2:49 which was 19 minutes behind the 5-hour pace and I headed back. Julie was in front of our Condo and I told her "This is not my day – I can't run because my HR keeps spiking". She told me that "Billy was 5 minutes behind me and Jason says you can't walk and need to maintain 7:10 pace". I continue my walk runs until just before the 31.4K turn. A guy by the side of the road comes out and wanted to Hi5 me. I was not in a good mood and thought about going wide but guy says "John McManus, you are leading M70-74 by 8 minutes". Now I know JOHN is on my bib, but how does this John Wagner know me. He walks beside me and says I'm entering M70-74 next year and "I want to know what I need to do to get to Kona". He tells me he has been tracking me all day. On my way back, he tells me my lead is up to 10 minutes and "You are running faster than Billy". I start to get my motivation back and head into the next aid station for water and Mortal. As I walk out and throw my cup, the guy behind me says "We have to run again". He says "Easy jog for 30 seconds then we are going up to

10:30/mile pace". I am used to getting yelled at on my long runs so I do what I'm told. He tells me all about his family, his work, his Ironman experiences and I tell him a bit about me. When I mention about leading M70-74 and it is my life-long goal to go to Kona, he says "I'm going to get you to Kona". The sun had just set, and he made me run his pace and picked out points where we could walk for 30 secs. He counted down the times like he was a Garmin and we were off again. I told him that "I hope that we don't see Julie on our return as she will go to the finish line if I have a decent lead." We ran about 4K, and I see Julie about 5K down course from our condo. She said "You have more than a 4-minute lead but you can't walk it home". I tell her "no problem, I have a new little friend Jordan and he is like a run coach who is going to get me to Kona".



We ran with short walks and my Garmin was showing the kms were buzzing at between 7 and 8 minutes. With less than 2km to go, I encouraged Jordan to leave me behind as he wanted to PR his IM run under 5 hours, and PR his overall IM time. I jogged the final bit at 7 min pace and crossed the line just under 14 hours at 13:58:41



AFTER THE RACE

I walked home with all my stuff and the guy at the Condo front door told me "The Jays are going to win Game 7 as they are leading 4-3 in the bottom of the 8th inning" While social media was blowing up about the race, I settled down to watch what I thought was to be the last inning. Unfortunately, the game went to extras which delayed my shower!



AWARDS CEREMONY

In our M70-74 category, there were only 7 signed up, 5 checked in and one guy did not make the swim cut-off. So that meant we only had 4 finishers and the top 3 showed up for the awards ceremony. I had a great chat with Jim from Kingston ON who was in the lead after the bike, and Billy who was chasing me down early in the run. They both wished me well at Kona and Billy said "I want to hear all about your Kona experience."



ROLLDOWN CEREMONY

The rolldown ceremony was interesting as almost every winner took their slot. One female spot rolled to 2nd, one female spot rolled to 3rd and one female slot rolled right out into the performance pool. From what I saw, no females received a performance slot and I would not have received one if I did not win the AG.



WRAP UP OF IMFL 2025

I had support from so many people but I can't possibly thank them all here. Special mention goes to Yumi and Jason for continuing to harp on my nutrition and fueling, and then sending me down to Florida with daily fortune cookies with race guidance. Meeting Jordan at the aid station changed my day. When we were getting going after a 15 sec walk break, a female triathlete who we were passing said to me "You are so lucky to have a good friend like that". I smiled thinking I've known him for less than 10 minutes! But he had told me that he volunteers with both military vets and special needs folks who need support. For a podcast, he had interviewed Chris who was the first special needs athlete to complete a full Ironman. Julie laughed when I told her about Jordan's non-profit work as she said "you are in both of those categories"

