

IRONMAN NEW ZEALAND 2008

I had a great build into Ironman New Zealand. The training went well and I was producing PBs in local cycling time trials. The new Felt DA is a treat and I feel so comfortable riding it. I produced a PB in my last Half Ironman along with my first professional victory and was hoping I could finally break the Ironman 4th placing hoodoo and step up onto the podium in NZ!

It had been so nice leading up to race day! The sun had been shining, a calm lake and very little rain. Race day obviously was a different story but it still produced the best day I have ever had!

The morning was calm for the swim start but my stomach was doing back flips as I entered the water. I knew once the cannon went off it would be business as usual and I would be feeling a lot better.

With New Zealand being so close to Australia it was an excuse for some extra members of "Team Bevilaqua" to make the trip across.

Mum and Dad, Aunty Janice, Uncle Neil, cousin Darryl and family friends Nola and Leigh had strategically planned where they would locate themselves throughout the race to offer that extra support.

Bang! We were away and I got "smashed". With the pro's starting just in front of the rest of the field it wasn't long before I was being "run down" by those behind me and found myself struggling for breath. It seemed to take forever for this to end, plus the fact it felt like my timing chip was about to be ripped off my ankle! Eventually I was able to relax, get into a rhythm, and exited the water for the long run (over 400m!) to transition. This gave me plenty of time to get the wetsuit down and prepare myself for the job ahead.

I knew Gina and Jo were strong swimmers and was just hoping to limit the damage as much as possible. I was close to 6 minutes down on leaving transition. Bugger!!

Once onto the bike though I was happy and it didn't take long to relax and start working hard. There was a small section through town, up a hill and out onto Broadlands road. I was just beginning to feel like I had warmed up and settled into my nutrition routine when the next minute I heard a whistle and a motor bike next to me. I received a 4 minute drafting penalty. My first one ever and I realised how frustrating it was to be standing on the side of the road watching other athletes go flying past. Rules are rules and once the time was up I was back on the bike determined to make up for lost ground.

Beginning the second lap the rain came down heavy and the head wind had increased. The good news was this meant a nice tail wind on the journey home.

"Team Bevilaqua" were at every turnaround on the bike offering encouragement and getting just as wet and as soaked through as I was!

After the final turn around I had caught up to the girls in front but was still 6 minutes down on Jo. I needed to see if I could make some time up in the final 45km. For this last section I reminded myself of a fast, tough ride my cousin Wesley and I did over Christmas. It was only about 50km, but we pushed each other from Augusta to Margaret River. I kept thinking to myself, Augusta to Margaret River. I felt good so pushed the pace and came into transition in 3rd just under 5 minutes down from the lead.

Coming out onto the run, the legs didn't feel too bad and it was easy to be caught up in the huge crowds who were battling the elements, standing in the rain to cheer us on. Shortly after the 2km loop through town I had run into second and was gaining on Jo. I may have been running a little quicker than I originally planned but when there is someone in front of you to catch, you have to try. I was feeling good so went with it! I also thought I would take advantage of the tail wind! After the turnaround and coming back into town it felt like running up hill with the head wind that was slowly increasing.

Beginning the second lap I collected my run bands and prepared myself mentally for what lay ahead. Had I gone out too hard, would I catch Jo? I would just have to wait and see.

I finally caught Jo at about the 26km mark and came up along side her. Not having been in this position before I really did not know what to do! Do I run straight past, do I sit back behind, should I surge? When?

We ran side by side for 10km with 95% of the crowd cheering 'Go Jo! This is your race! Beat that Aussie!!' But at the turn around was dad, Leigh and Darryl giving me plenty of encouragement.

I must admit, at this time it was all pretty exciting! I felt overwhelmed to be where I was at that point of time in the race. The helicopter overhead filming, 3 motorbikes around us with cameras. One of them was talking on his radio to someone saying "I was going to go and video 3rd place but these two are still running side by side!"

We turned into the wind for the last time and tackled the long, slow climb. With the conditions as they were, it was a very tactical run and I ended up running in front, not the best position to be in at that time.

We ran into the suburbs and before I knew it, she surged! I tried to go, but the elastic band was getting longer and longer until it eventually broke!

I tried, but was unable to go with her. With 6km to go I had worked so hard to get into that position, there was only enough left in the tank to make it to the finish line.

And what a finish line it was! The rain continued to come down but that smile on my face was from ear to ear! Mum and dad were there at the end. Mum and I with tears in our eyes! "Team Bevilaqua" had got me through to a 2nd place finish at Ironman New Zealand and a 9.20hours PB!

Thankyou so much to Mum, Dad, Janice, Neil, Daryl, Nola and Leigh for all your support in NZ! Seeing you at all the different locations on the course really does make a huge difference!

Ben and Tracy Marshall from Performance Bicycle Tuning. The way Ben looked after my bike was fantastic! On a course known for rough roads, I enjoyed a smooth, fast bike ride!

Tony Bence Sports Massage for keeping me in the best shape throughout training and racing.

Last but not least! Coach Andrew! It is obvious that what you do and prescribe works. I am living proof of that! That win will be coming sooner rather than later!

It was an unbelievable day and Jo is a true champion and legend of the sport winning her 6th title in a row.

With finally my first podium in an Ironman, I learnt so much on the day and can't wait to race again to put those lessons into practice!

Train Safe!
KT