



Camp Pendleton Hard Corps Sprint Triathlon
Martha Szufnarowski – August 4, 1012
500yd swim, 19 mile bike, 3.1 mile run
1:41, 2nd Place, 45-49

I just happened to win 2nd place in my age group 45-49 in a competitive field of 22 women (yes, more than 2!) I am a bit happy and full of myself. Too bad if you missed my medal this weekend. I'll wear it all week.

Despite being a coach, I rarely get on podium. It's HARD to be at the top of this age group!! LOL! I am particularly proud of this win as it is a "hard corps" race with very accomplished women. In short, it was a good day!

RACE SUMMARY: (splits are not posted yet, but here are my watch times)

Swim: 12:09

Bike: 58 minutes

Run: 24 ish minutes (I pushed stop instead of lap on my watch. URGH!!!)

Once again, I didn't want to do a sprint triathlon. I hate going fast for short periods of time! It HURTS!! I am competitive. I want to do well. I tried to think of every excuse as to why I shouldn't race. At one point I was down-right furious with myself for wasting so much energy on those thoughts. The night before the race I went to a wedding and drank 2 glasses of wine against my personal policy. Why? The wedding was at a winery on Santiago and the wine was free! Perhaps there was a measure of self sabotage in there.....? On the ride home at 10pm I said to my husband John, "Should I race tomorrow?" He said, "Nah.. skip it." Olivia piped up immediately, "MOM!! When I did my supersprint triathlon last year I went to bed past 2am, got up at 4am and still raced. You can do a sprint!" Oh. No turning back now. Mommy's gotta race to save face.

I went home, packed my stuff haphazardly and went to bed. Whatever will be will be.

But something happened on the way to the race. The darkness, the crisp air, the wait at the gate at Camp Pendleton, the desire to be the first one to the site (!), the way the Marines call me ma'am. As I drove to the AREA 5 on the base, the excitement grew. I was going to race today at a sport I love. I was going to attend an event that plays to my strengths: rough ocean swim, long bike, flat run. I was going to be a competitor at one of my favorite locations!! OKAY!! That old feeling is back!!! And, er, so is the need to visit the porta potties 4 times. Yes. 4 times. I knew I was invested when that old feeling came back and back and back. I am RACING TODAY!!

In transition I enjoyed the camaraderie that comes with race morning banter. All the surprises from my peeps... "Martha, you're racing today? Where's your team? Thought you were retired." Wow. I have been away too long. I witness something for the first time ever at a triathlon: an athlete having a smoke outside transition. How did I know she was an athlete? She was wearing a wetsuit!

I had a very sobering moment while watching the swim exit. A Marine came running up the beach carrying another Marine on his back. Why? He has no legs and was competing in the race. Surely I could celebrate a healthy, fit, able body. In fact, it was in that moment that my desire to lay it all out in this race finally settled with me. These Marines suffer in order to protect me. I can feel some discomfort to enjoy a hobby as a civilian. Geesh. (really... my inside voice was saying "stop being a pussy and just race your best race. You are f*^ing lucky to be doing it.)

Onto the race start with a new attitude adjustment.

Swim: this race includes the hardest 500yd race I have ever done. There are big waves and deep surf. The current was so strong we had to enter the water 200+ yds prior to the buoy to make the turn accurately. Most swimmers exited the water 200+ yds north of the official exit due to being pulled with the current. I was wave 13 (last) and watched endless swimmers get pulled along and/or rescued by the lifeguards. At least 2 guys got stung by stingrays. Good times!! I studied the prior waves as they entered and exited and set my strategy. It worked. I was spot-on with sighting. When I came out of the water, I didn't see any green caps ahead of me. I am waiting for the splits to be posted to see where I stand.

Ran up the beach along a stream of Marines telling me to "GO MA'AM! You can do this!!" Yes, I can. Transition was good.

Bike: Ah, sweet bike. I love the bike. Except when I am trying to ride 20 miles at all out speed. To put this in perspective, I rode as hard as you ride in my spin classes – but continuously. No nice recovery songs or funny stories! Total focus, burning legs, lungs pumping. Then I see emergency vehicles and a racer being loaded into an ambulance. Slows me down for about 2 minutes as I get cautious. Put this in the rear view mirror and ride like the wind. No one passes me on the bike. I pass countless. Thank you, bike legs! Transition is good.

Run: there is a ramp that accommodates amphibious vehicles leading into and out of transition. It is steep and long perhaps 500 yards? I hardly noticed it on the bike exit, but now it is a mountain in front of me. To make matters worse, the men who finished their race are walking down it all happy and recovered. Urgh. I am determined to leave every last piece of energy out on this run course. All of a sudden I hear strange sounds. Panting, wheezing, gasping andmoaning? ICK! To my horror, these sounds are coming from me. Really? This is a first. I am now "that racer!" The annoying person making all that noise on the course. I guess that's what it takes to get on podium!! Once I am up the ramp and round the corner with the spectators, I get energized. I find a fast pace and hold on for dear life. No planned walk breaks. Before mile 1 I see that Marine with no legs again. He is by the side of the course with one of his prosthetics off and he is massaging his stump. Looks like he is in incredible pain. I keep running. On the way back to the finish, he is still there. I feel compelled to comment "We're pulling for you." I don't know why. He looks up with a painful and angry look. Yikes. I should have kept my mouth shut. As I get to mile 2.5 I am tanked and want to walk. I take 2 steps and can't do it. I think of that Marine and the pain he is feeling now. I can't stop. Digging deep, I bring it all to the finish line. It's possible I was making those noises again, but all I heard were cheers and the voice in my head saying, "I DID IT!" I gave it my all.

Podium is all about who shows up. Personal best is in our control. It's nice when we achieve both.