

## 5/19/19 Half Ironman at Chattanooga – Race Report by Sue deJesús

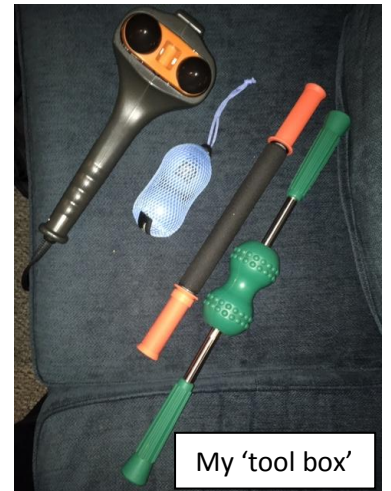


To begin with, the real purposes of this race were #1 **“Doing What It Takes”** to prepare my body to race after an illness, and #2 practicing the **“Execution of the Nutrition and Pacing Strategies”** to race with no regrets in effort.

#1: I raced this race to the fullest of my ability for where I am right now just a few short months after being very sick with bronchitis for over 3 months! I have never been so sick in my life, and it scared my husband terribly because I often couldn't

catch my breath and he thought I could die. I told him to call 911 if I couldn't breathe! Really scary stuff!

It takes time for a body to recover from an illness like that, sometimes *several* months. I couldn't exercise at all for the longest time because any activity, even walking would send me into a coughing fit and I couldn't catch my breath. I scared even myself! After the layoff in my training my start back has been rocky. I've had trouble with nerve pain down my left leg, low back pain, severe shin pain, extreme ankle tenderness, a burning eye sty, and hip misalignment! Oh my!



My preparation for this race was to do all I could do to get my body race ready; roll out tight spots, visit physical therapy and the chiropractor, ice everywhere, sit in the recovery boots, thump out the places that can be thumped (!) and visit the massage therapist, and drink lots of healing herbal tea! (And prayer too!) I spent no less than an hour or two a day on these duties. On race day I taped my lower shin/ankle and amazingly I had no pain in my body while racing. Quite the miracle! Ten days ago I was researching the possibility of not racing at all. Ultimately I decided that there were many more reasons to race than not to as long as my body calmed down.



#2: I executed my race nutrition and pacing plans with only minor adjustments on the run. I calculated my calories per hour plus extra just in case the heat caused me to need more, and I planned when I would take in those calories/ carbs/ sodium, plus factoring in hydration to be picked up at every aid station so I would have plenty of fuel and water to give my body what it needs to race my best in the heat. I can't think of anything fuel or pacing wise that I could have done any better. The second lap of the run I found a groove that felt so right even with the heat! The temperature high

mid-day was a roasting 89° and the morning started at a cool enough to need a jacket 64°.

RESULTS: What my efforts, plans, fitness, and strategies purchased for me this day was a place on the podium with the Bronze 3<sup>rd</sup> place award. “Only third??” I hear some saying? Let me put things in perspective. Attendance for this race broke all North American records for a Half Ironman coming in at a whopping 3,644 racers! (Typical attendance would be 2000-2,500). My time was faster than 1,868 other athletes both male and female. Of those, 1,114 were men ages 18 to 73. This is what I mean by perspective: Not only did I win 3<sup>rd</sup> in my own age group, my time was faster than just short of TWO THOUSAND other fit racers, almost all of them much YOUNGER than I. I feel pretty amazing about that on my comeback! I worked extraordinarily hard just to be healthy enough to race at all, so this is a sweet and savory victory for me.

This race, in my mind, is a grand success because I accomplished my two purposes completely. I accomplished what I set out to do. Winning one of the coveted top 3 podium spots (Gold, Silver or Bronze) alone can be a very narrow focus but looking at the broader view really gives me the true value of accomplishing my purposes. The greater accomplishment is to do all I set out to do, which I did. In the broad picture, I won over almost 2 thousand other well conditioned athletes who were pursuing their own win.

I learned at this race that not all athletes race and think as I do. One 73 year old woman who I talked to while waiting for the swim to start bemoaned the fact that last year she missed qualifying for the World Championship by 2 minutes. And this was her commentary; “I wish I had known because I would have tried harder!” I thought to myself, “No, no! You should always have a racing strategy, a plan that you follow and you give it your best effort for each leg of the race, throughout the whole race so you end the race knowing you could not have done any better nor raced any faster.” If you don’t do this, as this woman found out, regret stays with you!

When life knocks you down, the unexpected happens, and you feel like you have to start all over again, do what it takes to get back on your feet and back on track. Yes, it’s a lot of work. And Yes, it takes more time than you would like, but it’s how you come back. Figure out what it is that you want to accomplish, develop a plan and a strategy to accomplish it, adjust the plan as necessary, as often as necessary, and consult with others who have other disciplines that can help you. Give it your best effort, don’t hold anything in reserve, and watch the results and rewards of your hard work and planning come to pass. This takes patient endurance!

Finally, look at the bigger picture to keep perspective. What is truly important in the long run is 1) even though you keep the titles earned for your lifetime, the glow and excitement of a first place win or major accomplishment lasts maybe a week or two, the trophy gets put on the shelf and the ribbon is mounted on the wall hanger, and the memory of the tremendous effort it took fades like the pain of childbirth; or 2) is it even more important over time to focus on the valuable lessons learned, the personal insights gained, a disciplined, goal-focused and intentional lifestyle that has been adopted so that personal growth ensues, plans get developed and executed which all forge valuable character traits of tenacity, flexibility, and

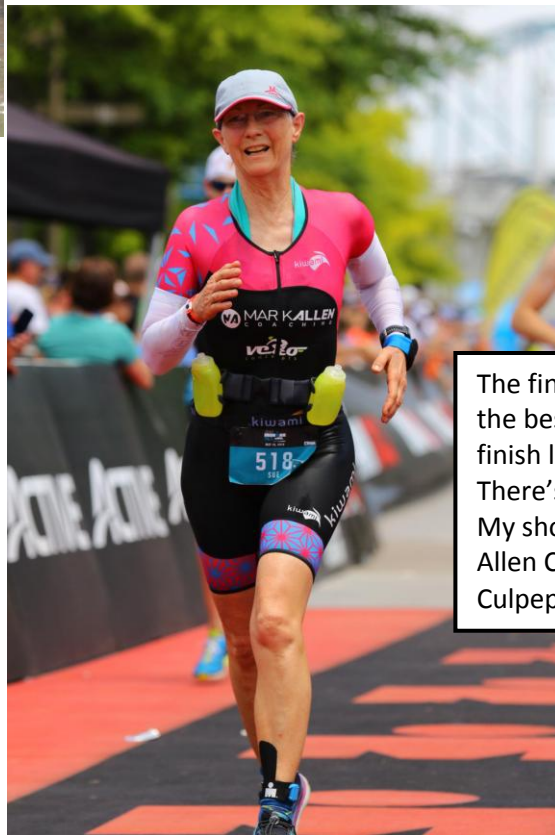
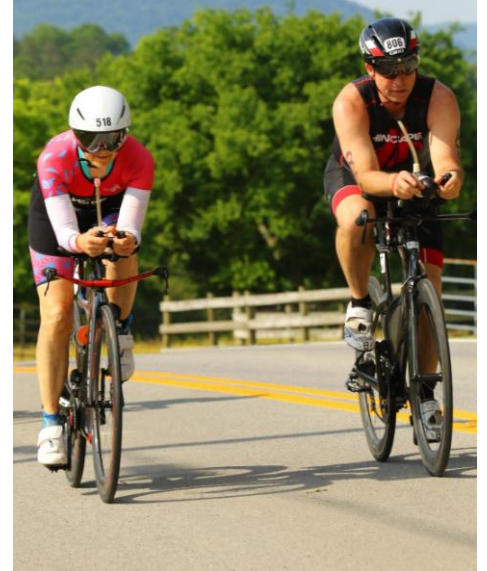
patience you then carry with you everywhere you go! While it's awesome to have the end result of hard work to be titles and a string of the top podium wins, I definitely choose the better long term big-picture gains of personal character development over temporary and fading glory! While I can't control who shows up on race day, I CAN control how I race and the level of effort I put into it so that I carry the satisfaction of having done all that is within my power and control rather than living with the regret of "I could have, and should have tried harder!"

In the end, what most people think is the most important aspect, (the end goal, the podium wins, the big accomplishment), this is not nearly as important as the quality person you become as you pursue it!



First thing after the swim is to grab the cord on the back to unzip the wetsuit, and peel it down to the waist so the wetsuit peelers can rip it off as you lay on the ground. They have a designated spot where this is done. It's always great to have the help!

My 53 year old Bike Buddy! We played leapfrog the *whole* bike course. He said at one point, "There must be 10 of you!" He beat me on the bike by 17 seconds, but by the end I beat him by 5 minutes!



The final approach to the finish line! It's the best part of the race, crossing that finish line knowing I have given my all! There's no feeling and satisfaction like it! My shout out and gratitude goes to Mark Allen Coaching and VeloConcepts, Culpeper's Bicycle Fit Lab & Studio!