

From Australia: Kim Goodell's World's Blog 9/14/09

Posted By:Kim Goodell

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Race morning I woke up at 3:45, excited as a kid on Christmas morning! I normally wake up with some dread and the notion that staying in bed would be vastly preferable to 2+ hours of extreme physical exertion. The eagerness to race was a welcome change from the usual.

I arrived at transition right when it opened at 5:15, and it seemed like only minutes later that it was already 7am – time to line up. The mood at the starting line was different from recreational races – no smiles, no Good Luck wishes. The swim start exploded into a throbbing, thrashing mess. At first I couldn't find the water – in front, below, on either side – all I could feel were rubbery wetsuits, grabbing hands, violently kicking feet...Then the water found me – I inhaled a massive, stinging salty wave. Ouch!

After the first turn, the mob thinned and I thought I might have a chance to settle in and enjoy the swim. My competitors had other plans for me. Several times, I felt a hand close around my calf

and I had to kick frantically to free myself. I realized that the 5 swimmers nearest to me were all desperately trying to draft off of me and one another, so we were still swimming on top of each other. I know what the freestyle stroke feels like when it collides with me in the water, and it does not involve grasping and clinging... I felt fingers close around my arm, pinning it to my side. I tried to pull free, but she was still attached to my arm – an action that puzzled me since it prevented her forward motion as much as it prevented mine. I wriggled free and broke into a sprint, finding extra motivation to get to the shore and escape the predators in the water.

Once on the bike, I began picking people off easily. It wasn't long before an Australian, DILLON, passed me like she meant business. I decided to watch her awhile and contemplate a counterattack. She didn't open a gap on me, so I surged past her and took the lead again. A few minutes later, she was back – with reinforcements. DILLON, WATTS, BROWN pulled past me, one after the other. I heard a whistle and the Race Official was signaling for one of us to pull over. But which one? It was Watts she was after, so the rest of us sped away as the Official flashed a Yellow Card at Watts – presumably for drafting... That made me nervous, and I decided I would be safer in the front, so I pulled past the 2 Australians again. The course was congested, so as I caught up to people, it was more and more difficult to pass... or so I thought. A streak of green & yellow whipped past – DILLON, BROWN, WATTS (back so soon?!), SPOTTISWOOD, GRAY, NIND, wheel to wheel. I watched as they formed a tight pack in front, looking like a team of fighter jets. Soon the Race Official was back flashing her Yellow Card, and this time it was Spottiswood who had to pull over and step off of her bike as penalty. Although I kept some distance, I was clearly within their draft zone, coasting at 24 mph. I started to feel guilty – I didn't come this far to go on a leisurely bike ride! I also didn't like the idea of being in the wrong place at the wrong time when the Race Official returned. But if I wanted to pass, I would have to pass all 6 at once! I attempted a breakaway as we turned into the second lap, charging as hard as my legs could go. I held it for a few minutes but it wasn't enough. The pack, still led by Dillon, cruised by me again, now 10 strong. And of course, Spottiswood had already caught up and resumed her position in the peloton, unfazed by the penalty. With a full lap still to go, and the crowds on the course increasing, I gave up trying to resist the draft and remained lodged in a crowd of at least 20 cyclists. I hoped it would give me the opportunity to run on fresh legs.

The run was good, and I spent most of it passing people. With km markers instead of mile markers, there was no way for me to gauge my pace (can't do mathematical conversions while racing) so I hoped I was running hard enough. When I rounded the final corner, I was good and ready to be done, but instead of charging in with a massive finish line sprint, I decided to savor my moment running down the finish chute at the 2009 World Championships! The stands were full of spectators cheering "USA!", and the announcer pronounced my name right as I rounded the corner...

It was totally awesome!

