

2006 Lanikai Duathlon Race Experience by Mike Nishimoto (Challenged Athlete)  
*(Mike recovered from a bike/car accident a few years ago and has returned to the sport he loves with passion)*

It was an overcast day in Hawaii. Anticipation was high considering this was the second triathlon of the year. Most triathletes weren't thinking of the race, but the conditions of the water. Weeks before, Hawaii was hit with a major storm, drenching the islands for about 30 days causing numerous sewage floodings and broken sewer pipes. Millions of gallons of sewage waste was pumped into the ocean, and one person fell into the Ala Wai Boat Harbor causing him to contract the flesh eating virus. Few days later he died. Fortunately the race director decided to modify the sprint triathlon to a duathlon. I was relieved not have to worry about the possibility of getting a life threatening infection in the water, but now worried about surviving the race. My strongest event, the swim, was changed to my weakest event, the run. I knew the Lanikai Hill was going to be a challenge, but now I have to climb it twice. I was thinking about pulling out, but instead decided to go ahead and give it a go.

The race started at the bottom of Lanikai Hill, which didn't give us anytime to warm up before tackling the steep hill. Struggling up the hill, I had thought my heart would have burst due to the high altitude, or just not in shape for that kind of a challenge. Finally I reached the top of the mountain and looked ahead. Nobody was in site! I was now alone in my first triathlon challenge of the year. I trudged along with my sturdy companion, da cane, limping along the course with my girlfriend. I was hoping for an 18 min/mile pace on the first run, but knew I still had a long day and didn't want to burn myself out to early. I had thought it would be a hot day today, but fortunately it ended up staying overcast and a nice cool, windy day which helped me from becoming dehydrated. After a long 41 minutes, the first run was over. As I jumped on my bike, I heard the announcer say that the first racer had finished his bike portion and was starting the run (He won the race with a sub 1 hour time).

After leaving the bike transition area, I felt like I was going to have a great bike ride. My legs felt fresh and knew that the course was flat except one hill at the turnaround. I remember seeing a few mountain bikes racked at the transition at the start of the race and was hoping to close the gap and maybe even passing one of my competitors. My bubble was burst when I approached the turnaround spot. Da Hill was steep! I had just started climbing the hill when I looked down and noticed I was already in my easiest gear. My granny gear (27x27) felt more like my largest gear as I made the one mile climb. I guess the only good thing was that I was so far back that I could utilize the whole road. I zig zagged across the road to help cut down on the steepness of the hill. I

could just see Wendy volunteering up at the top of the hill thinking who that drunken cyclist was. Finally after an eternity, I reached the top! At that time, I knew I wasn't going to catch anyone on the bike. About a mile past the hill, I was sandwiched between two police escorts who escorted me back to the bike finish. I finished in one hour eleven minutes. (9.6 min/mile pace).

The second run was really tough. My legs felt like jello and my back was starting to hurt and had stiffened up. Somehow, I managed to climb Mount Everest and proceeded along the run course. I could see people looking at me wondering why I was still racing when everyone else had finished about an hour earlier. I just smiled and continued to trudge along at my brisk 22 minute mile pace. I was surprised that the aid station was still there when I reached it. I thanked the volunteers and continued the last 1.5 miles of the run course. Just before I reached Mount Everest, the cone truck past me picking up the last of the course cones. At that time, I figured that the race directors had already finished with the awards ceremony and everyone was heading home. My spirit was broken and all I had left was the long crawl up the mountain. Finally after one hour eight minutes on the run course, I crossed the finish line.

I was surprised that so many people were still there and I received a loud applause when I crossed the finish line. It felt good to finish the race and that there were so many people there to congratulate my accomplishment. Usually I am so far behind that the finish line is already toren apart and everyone is gone. It made me feel like part of the triathlon community.

Thanks to Raul and Hina for putting on a great race! I never felt like I was in danger at any portion of the race. The volunteers were great as well as the police escorts. I cant wait to participate in this race again next year.

By the way, after a few days of rest, I am now ready to raise the ante and participate in the Honolulu Triathlon in five weeks. Wish me luck!

Mikey "Da Turtle" Nishimoto