



We'll see if I can write this coherently and without sobbing twelve hundred times.

I have been trying to find the words to describe the experience of this past weekend. People keep asking me how it was and I usually say, "It was insane." Accurate. It was also wonderful, terrible, amazing, and horrible. What I experienced on Sunday will never be duplicated—both fortunately and unfortunately.

I like sleep. Friday night Lisa and my tent was attacked by raccoons all night. I am not a fan of the gross parts of nature (remember my opossum debacle?). Needless to say, there wasn't a lot of sleep for anyone. On Saturday, Jay, Kyle, and I headed out to pick up all of our packets and get everything set up in our transition areas. Kyle, being the OCD caveman he is, took his sweet time...but other than that, it was uneventful. I was panicking a lot. Pretending I was calm. PSA: If I tell you I'm calm, there is a 99% chance I am lying—I have never been calm a day in my life. While Glaspy's went to the beach for Skylynn's birthday (I didn't want to be in the sun), I got to spend some time with Lunsfords and Lisa under the pop-ups and relaxing. It was perfect.

Saturday night? I slept three hours. I was tossing and turning, freaking out about getting a flat tire, going through every scenario in my head of what could go wrong. It was a long night. At 4:30, I finally got up and ate with Kyle and Jay. We made our way to the bathrooms for our special bonding time of nervous shitting within earshot of one another, and picked up a dude from Holland, Lars, and headed off to the beach.

Seeing everyone there was incredible. And overwhelming. We say Carey Pemberton and I gave her a big hug. It was exactly what I needed. No matter how long and how hard I looked, I could not find Carrie anywhere and I freaked out for a while wondering if she even got in the water. I made some new friends, Kate and BK, who were super positive and kept me grounded. I saw Eric right before entering the water—it was amazing to see a familiar face, and I knew I had it.

The swim was fine. Super congested, super chaotic. I was kicked and scratched and swam over more times than I remember. Due to constantly trying to dodge people, I swam about 300 yards over the distance and finished in 52 minutes. I saw Cortney (I know others were there—but she was the one I remembered) and knew I still had the support team there. The bike transition was eat, put on socks and shoes, helmet, sunscreen, and go. I saw my parents and brothers right before my first turn onto 23. I was so excited. They made signs and were cheering for me. I was on cloud 9. Until I wasn't.

I saw all the cars slam on the brakes and bikes dropping to the ground. I heard someone scream, “Biker down!” and another start yelling for someone CPR certified. I jumped off the bike and said I was. What I saw I will never forget or unsee for the rest of my life. Ever. I stood over a woman who had been hit by a semi. I looked down and knew there was nothing I could do. It's nothing like I can describe. And I won't. Another woman ran up behind me and stated that she was a doctor. I backed away and went to my bike. All of my nutrition and water bottles were strewn across the road as I had thrown my bike down when I jumped off. I got back on my seat and rode on like I was in a dream. More like a nightmare. Kristen, we will never truly know what happened on that day. What was going on. But my heart breaks for you and your family. Ironman is supposed to be a wonderful day. I am so sorry and will always be thinking of everyone involved.

The bike is a blur. I sobbed for a long time. I saw my family a ton of times (they did a lot of driving and I will never be able to thank them enough for their support). Kyle came up behind me around mile 14 or 15 and yelled, “Sexy Lexi!” and that also boosted my spirit. I saw my new friends, Kate and BK, along the course as well and had little conversations with them. Miles 20-56 were constant headwind. Painful headwind. Thanks, Joe. Then it was intense hills from miles 46-56. When I finally got done with the bike, I knew I was in trouble for the run. My heart rate was through the roof the entire bike and I didn't know how I was supposed to keep going. Out I went.

Again, I saw family and friends and saw smiles along the run. It was insanely hot. I was splashed with water and had ice thrown down my shirt almost every aid station. I chugged as much as I could without throwing up and kept moving on. I saw Kyle again. He was on lap two when I was on lap one. He looked incredible. His positivity gave me life for a little bit. Once I

started lap two, I saw my family again. I remember my dad yelling, “You look great!” and me yelling back, “I feel like shit!” Just being honest! I walked a lot during miles 8-11, but I knew I was going to finish. At one point I realized I never had to do this again and got excited.

The finish line was perfect. The good thing about finishing last? Everyone was there to cheer for you. Haha. We had a sea of JG3 people in the stands, Amanda and her kids right outside the stadium, my uncles, aunt, cousins, and grama right outside the stadium, and my parents and brothers at the finish line. It was so loud. Incredible. I get emotional thinking about it. As soon as I finished, people were throwing a medal, a hat, and water in my hands and I made my way to the timing chip tent to sit in the shade and cry. The emotions. Wow. I got up and gave my family huge hugs and got to share the experience with my gym family. My heart was so full and so broken at the same time.

To everyone who came to camp, to watch, tracked me on the app, and supported me along the way – I will never be able to thank you enough. I won't. EVERY SINGLE JG3 MEMBER was with us. You did this with us. My family? They saw my struggle. They saw the work I put in. They supported me and pushed me when I didn't want to keep going. They drove miles and miles to make sure I felt supported the whole race. Like damn.

To the team. John was with me during a ton of pool swims and was so supportive. I cannot wait for your turn. Jason was the first person I swam in the lake with for open water and would check in to make sure training was going well. Next year? Absolutely your year. Kyle. Kyle, we ran in a blizzard together. Haha. But you were always so positive throughout the process. It was what we needed. Carrie, our swims and bike and runs together always had great conversation and always made me feel like I could do anything. And Jay. I already told you a lot of what I wanted to say. Thank you for making a program that worked best for me and always reminding me that I'm a badass.

A lot of people have asked me if I would ever do this again. My answer? Absolutely not. Seeing what I saw and the mental and physical pain that occurred over the last seven months...nope. I was honored to do this for Joe and know that the title of IronWoman will never be taken away. It was, as I said, an incredible and horrible experience. I think I'm still trying to wrap my head around it. It's been a rough few days since I've been home both physically and mentally. However, I'm super excited to get back to my home and workout with my favorite people.