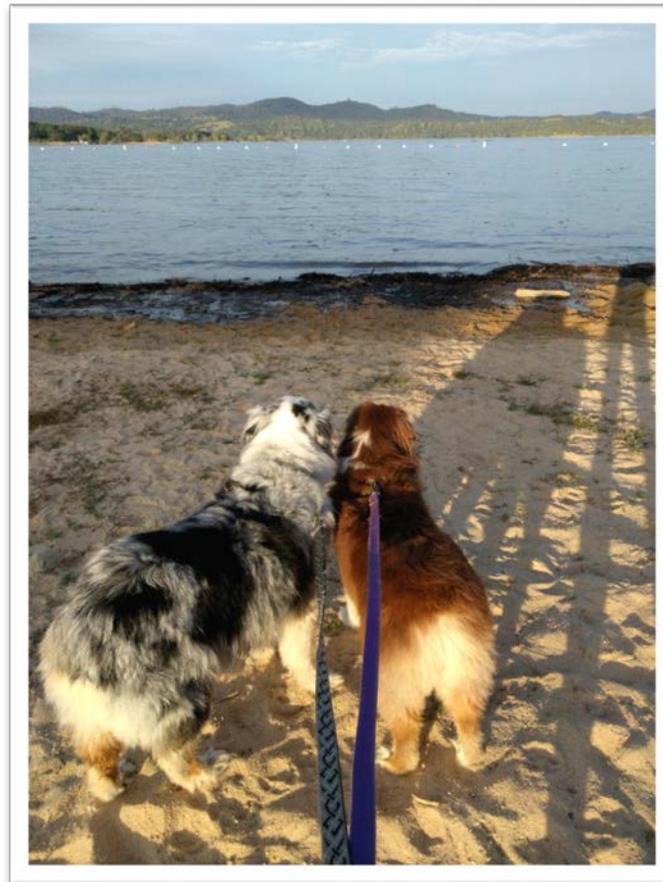




**Folsom International Triathlon. 1.5K SWIM, 40K BIKE, 10K RUN.  
By Diana Burkart-Waco**

Race prep started the weekend before with a trip out to Folsom lake to check out the race course. And by check out the race course I mean take the dogs for a swim and test ride a Cervelo P3. ;) Pup walks and triathlon bike shopping, two of my favorite things. Unfortunately, a bike was not purchased, but everyone had fun times at the lake.

The water was a good temperature (high 60s, which was excellent for me because I only own a sleeveless wetsuit and run cold all the time). The transition area was very familiar as I had previously raced at Granite Beach. The water had a bunch of floating wood pieces in it close to the shore. Gross. But otherwise the lake was very pretty.

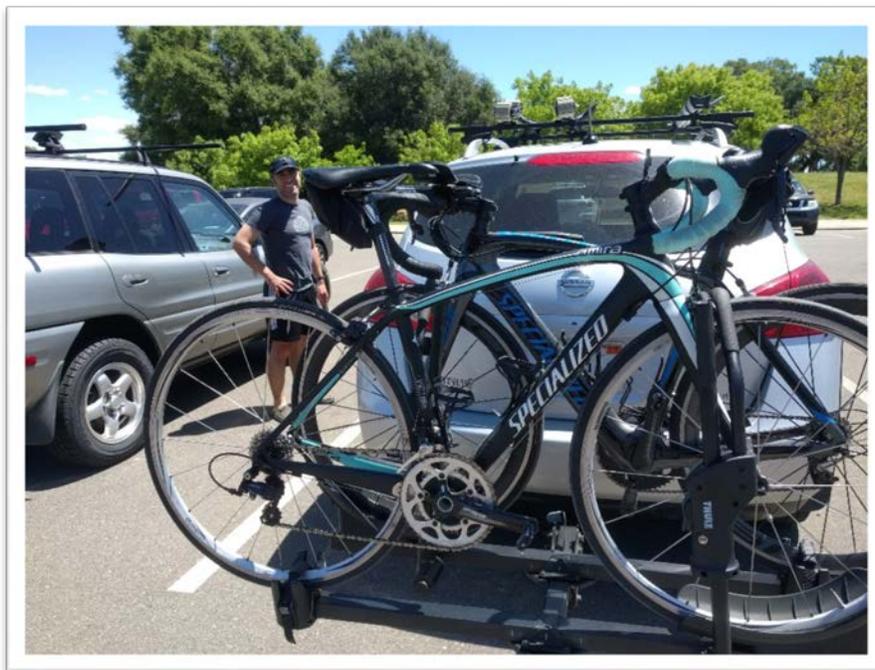


The day before race was super windy. I started to panic a little during the day because cycling is my weakest sport and I detest riding in wind. But being that I'm a type-A planner, I had my bags



all packed right after I got off work, which calmed me a little. Mathieu and I chatted a bit about the race course over dinner and the plan for the next day. He mentioned that the end of the bike course was not on google maps as part of the park road system. But of course I didn't pay much attention because eating >> race planning.

I woke up bright and early at 5am and was out of the house by 5:45am. The drive, packet pick-up, and set-up were super easy. The weather was beautiful and sunny with no wind!!! And all the driftwood had blown away from the shore. I had plenty of time to jog up and down the beach to warm-up and potty (super important for a 3hr race). All in all, it was about as stress-free as you can get for a triathlon start.



The swim was a beach start, meaning you start on the beach and run in the water. We had to swim a triangle around three buoys. The swim course was slightly confusing from the shore because there was a rogue buoy floating off in the middle of the lake. But the race director did a good job clarifying (actually he got a bit mad so many people kept asking about it). Although I am not a bad swimmer, I usually like to start in the back of the pack because I hate people touching my feet in the water. Even though I had gotten in the water prior to my wave, I was still shocked by how cold it felt and spent a few minutes panicking and swimming on my back (bad I know). I managed to pull it together after a few minutes and swim steady for the rest of the race.



Even though cycling is my least favorite of the three sports, I always feel sooo relieved when the swim is over. I am much happier swimming in a pool where I can see the bottom! The bike course was rather uneventful. It was all on beautiful country roads through the Granite Bay and Loomis area. This keeps it exciting and interesting; there is nothing worse than doing the same bike loop two or three times. The first 16 miles were on rolling hills, which seemed to go on forever and up. Seriously, so much climbing. I passed a lot of people on the climbs, but was dropped on the descents. The last few miles were a fast downhill. My Garmin hit 25 miles and I started to worry I missed transition somehow (the race is supposed to be 24.9 miles). And then I saw an arrow / course marker pointing off the road, straight into a sand pit. Remember back when Mathieu told me the road didn't meet the parking lot? Well it didn't. I was in a way too high a gear when I hit the sand and almost fell over. But managed to save it and make it into transition. All in all I was really happy with my bike performance even though I was slightly undertrained for the hills.

The run was all on trails through the park and looped from Granite Beach up toward Beals Point and back. I started out way too fast at an eight min / mile pace, which I could only hold for about 1.5 miles. Woops. Then my legs gave up, probably because they were exhausted from all the hills and training mostly on flat ground (thanks Davis). A lot of people were walking at this point because it was so hot and hilly. I took a lot of walk breaks and enjoyed the gorgeous lake views. Apparently you could even see snow in Tahoe, but I was too focused on not falling over on the single-track trails.





When I crossed the finish I felt certain that I had done really poorly because of all the run – walking. I chatted with Mathieu about the race and got some food. We had initially thought about swimming, but lost interest after eating. He insisted that I check the race results, but I didn't want to because I was convinced I couldn't have placed. I did. Imposter syndrome? Neither of us brought cameras to transition so no podium photos.

All in all it was a fun race and I would definitely do it again. The course is very challenging, with a lot of climbing (at least compared to what most of us are used to), but the hills keeps it interesting. Olympic triathlons are rather long and it is easy to loose focus. Having varied scenery goes a long way for keeping things fun and exciting even when you are hurting. Fun first race of the season with great company!

#### **Race pros**

- Good parking right next to transition and not really any traffic getting there and back.
- Small race.
- Easy, clean lake swim with lots of water support.
- Pretty scenery on both the bike and run.
- Good race venue.
- Pleasant temperatures at start and finish.

#### **Race Cons**

- Hard race / not a 'fast' (i.e. flat) course.
- Sand pit!?
- No aid stations on the bike.