



## Silverman Triathlon: A 2010 Race Report

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### My First DNF (“Did Not Finish”) Ever

*Thanks to wind, cramps and a measly fifteen minutes*

I might as well begin by acknowledging the ugly and embarrassing result: I DNF'd at Silverman. It also ended at eight my string of iron-distance triathlon finishes without a DNF. It was a major personal disappointment. My only consolation--though it doesn't make me feel that much better about it--is knowing that I did come very close to getting a chance to go on and finish the race. Silverman has been ranked among the ten toughest triathlons in the world thanks to its incredibly hilly bike course through the mountains of southern Nevada. If you're going to DNF, you might as well be able to say at least it was on one of the world's toughest courses.

This wasn't my first experience with Silverman. I had read about its difficulty when the race first appeared in 2005, and decided in 2007 to see if I could finish it. It was an enormous challenge, but I was fortunate to finish, in a time of 15:43:10. Immediately afterward, I swore I'd never do this race again. It was ridiculously hard, and I suffered terribly on the bike course. A few days later, my position softened, and I left open the idea of someday returning to try it again. In 2009, I decided that that "someday" would be in 2010. I wanted to see if I could finish it again, this time at the age of 55.

Even though I had already finished Silverman once, I still didn't go into it very confident that I'd finish it again. (Prior to the race in 2007, I only gave myself a 50-50 chance of finishing.) This race is extraordinarily hard, and many things completely out of your control can stand in your way of the finish line. Unless you're young, skinny and fast (none of which describes me), finishing Silverman is like coming away a winner at a Las Vegas casino: the odds aren't very good.

Silverman is so legendary in its difficulty that I believe it scares away many triathletes from participating, or at least those choosing to do the "full" (also known as "iron-distance") course, which consists of a 2.4-mile swim, a 112-mile bike and a 26.2-mile run. (A "half" Silverman is offered, but I have no interest in half of anything.) That's a shame, because this is an incredible event. Its organization is second to none, the course is stunningly beautiful, the volunteers are fantastic and the spectators are very supportive. Excluding relay teams, there were 279 finishers of this year's Full Silverman, and 536 finishers of the Half. I was the only person from Missouri competing that day at either distance.

## **Training**

For a year, my training was primarily focused on getting ready for Silverman. Above all, that meant lots of cycling on hills, which is about all we have in the Missouri Ozarks. You can never know with certainty whether all the miles you rode in training will be sufficient to get you to the end of the Silverman bike course, but I honestly thought I was adequately prepared. In the weeks before Silverman, I did several long rides that instilled some confidence that I was ready, including a ride on an extremely hilly route which, mile-for-mile, is actually tougher than Silverman. I rode this route soon before going to Silverman in 2007, and I think I handled it just as well this time around.

My swim training also went well this year, and I was pretty confident that I would have a good swim at Silverman. I live along the Lake of the Ozarks in south-central Missouri, and virtually all of my swimming during the summer--usually once or twice a week for an hour and a half nonstop--was in the lake. I'm lucky to be able to do so much open-water swimming. The thought of swimming 2.4 miles in murky water can be intimidating to those who aren't used to it. I didn't have any such fears. And thanks to boat traffic on the lake, I had to deal with much rougher water in training than I'd see at Silverman.

My run training was a bit less than what I had planned on thanks to an unusually long, hot summer. However, I thought it was more than adequate to get me to the finish line. While a 5K finish time isn't a reliable indicator of endurance for a marathon, I ran several 5Ks in decent times (for me, at least) in the month leading up to Silverman.

## Off to Las Vegas



*The world-famous welcome sign, at the southern end of the Las Vegas Strip.*

I flew from Springfield, Missouri, to Las Vegas on Thursday, November 4th. This gave me the next two (busy) days to get ready for the race on Sunday. On Friday afternoon, I went over to the Henderson Multi-Generational

Center to register for the race and to pick up my bicycle at Pro Cyclery's booth at the race expo. I then headed back to the Sunset Station Hotel & Casino to stuff my transition bags with the clothes and gear I'd need on Sunday--one of my least favorite things to do. On Friday evening, I drove out to Loews Lake Las Vegas Hotel for the Silverman pasta dinner. At the dinner, we were introduced to the Operation Rebound athletes--American soldiers who had suffered severe injuries in Iraq and Afghanistan--who would be competing in the half Silverman race. They were all truly inspiring to the rest of us.



*The front entrance to the Sunset Station Hotel & Casino. I stayed here in 2007 and, being a creature of habit, decided to do so again. It's a very nice hotel that was centrally located to all the race activities, and had all of the stores (e.g. Walmart, UPS Store) that I needed and restaurants I liked all within a couple blocks. Las Vegas' economy was hurting badly, and room rates were actually lower than in 2007.*



*The view from my hotel room, looking northeast across W. Sunset Rd. The Galleria at Sunset, a huge shopping mall, is just across the street.*



*The free swag handed out to Full Silverman participants at race registration. The backpack is very nice.*

Saturday started off with a 9:00 a.m. mandatory pre-race meeting at the Henderson Multi-Gen amphitheater. In the afternoon, I drove out to the race-start location at Lake Las Vegas to turn in my bike and transition bags, and to look at the swim course. The turn buoys marking the halfway point of the course were so far away, they were barely visible. You swear that they can't possibly be only 1.2 miles away, or that you're going to be able to swim to them .... and back.



*The pancake breakfast at the Henderson Multi-Gen Center on Saturday morning (above).*



*Frank Lowery, Silverman founder and race director, at the pre-race meeting at the amphitheater (left).*



*The Sunset Station was centrally located to just about every place I'd go during my stay in Las Vegas.*

Saturday night was spent getting everything organized for an early morning breakfast and the drive to Lake Las Vegas. I normally don't sleep well the night before a triathlon or marathon, so I took a Tylenol Sinus Nighttime tablet about an hour before going to bed. I got in bed around 9:30 p.m. and, to my surprise, slept very well until my alarms (I never trust just one) went off at 3:50 a.m. I ate breakfast (cereal, banana, fruit cup and grape juice) and took my nutritional supplements. I walked out of the hotel shortly before 5:00 a.m. and arrived at the parking garage at Lake Las Vegas around 5:20 a.m. (It's amazing how much easier it is to get around Las Vegas when there's no traffic and few red stoplights.)

## **Race Preparations**

The bike-to-run transition area was close to the swim start and finish. The organizers had obviously gone to great lengths in the days or weeks prior to the race to set it up. The area was mostly gravel, although lots of carpeting had been laid where necessary to protect our bare feet. It was very well-organized, with plenty of volunteers to give us help when needed.



*The race started at Lake Las Vegas. After finishing the swim, we entered the swim-to-bike transition area (“T-1”) to grab our bikes and gear and headed out on to the bike course.*

I went through the usual pre-race ritual of making last-minute preparations--putting water bottles on the bike, pumping up the bike tires, etc. About 30 minutes before the start, I donned my wetsuit, then made my way over to the swim start area. The water temperature was about 70 degrees. That’s a bit chilly to wade in for long, so I waited until about 10 minutes before the 7:00 a.m. start to get in the water and position myself at the starting line.





*Posing for the race photographer in the transition area before the race.*

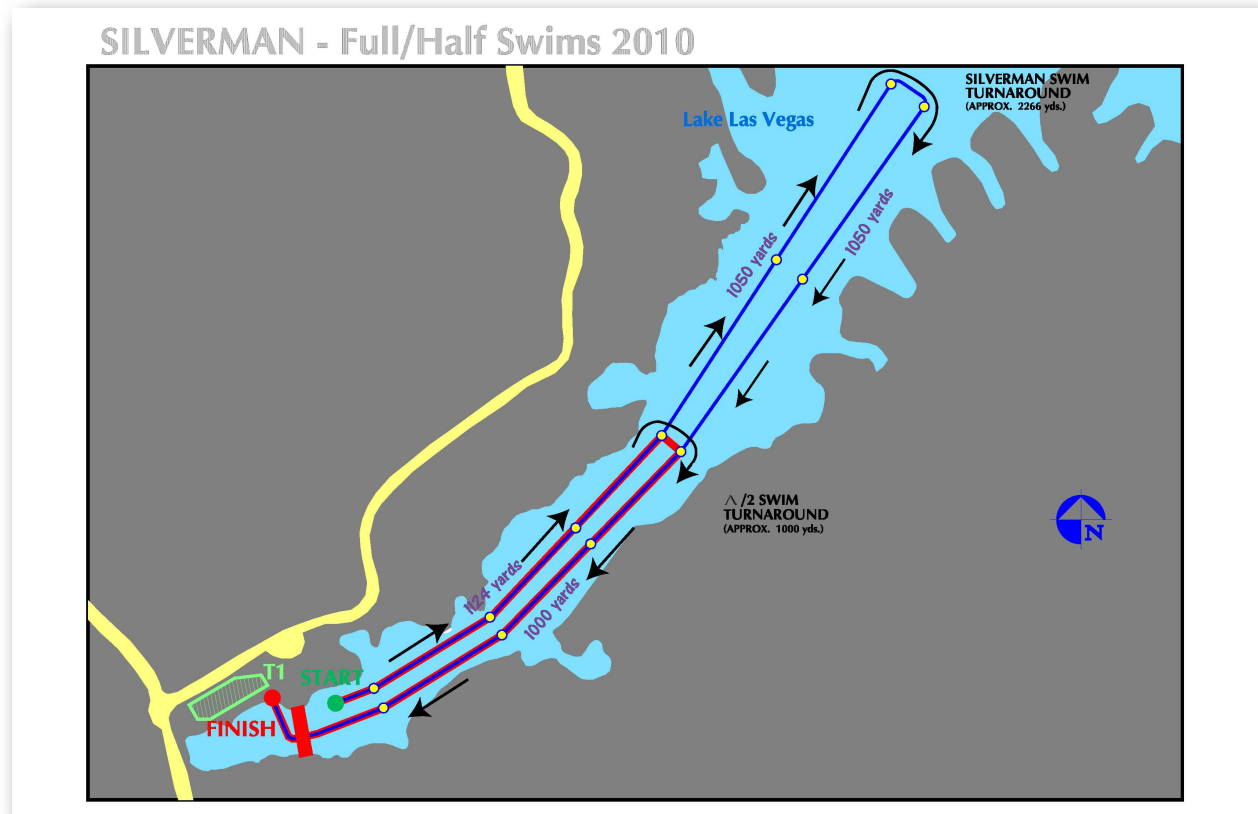
It was an absolutely beautiful morning. The skies were clear, there was no wind to speak of. The air temperature was about 60 degrees. It was perfect weather for a triathlon start.

Of the triathlons I've done, and with perhaps the exception of Ironman Wisconsin, this swim start was the most amenable to spectators and photographers. The starting line was just a bit beyond "the bridge"--a pedestrian bridge crossing over the lake with hotel rooms built above it. Spectators standing on the bridge were almost directly above us, and had a great view. It was neat for the swimmers in the moments before the gun went off to turn around and look up to see all the spectators. I've never been so close to spectators at the start of a race.

The starting line was a couple hundred feet across at most. I don't know exactly how many participants started the full Silverman (it had to be somewhere around 300), but we were able to spread across the starting line without anybody having to be more than 30-40 feet behind it.

The national anthem was played, and at 7:00 a.m. the gun sounded.

## The Swim

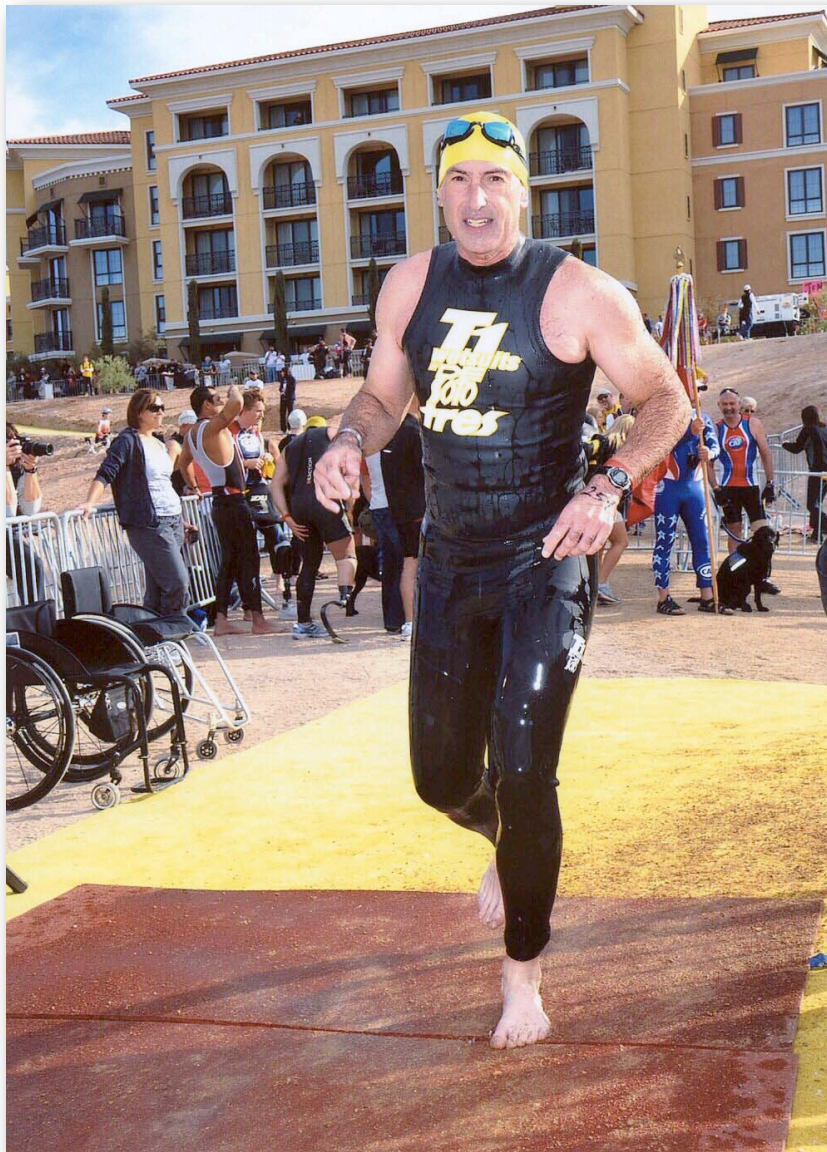


It wasn't long before I realized that the swim start was a lot more congested than what I first thought. Part of the explanation is that the distance between the shoreline on the left and the buoys on the right narrowed a few hundred yards after the starting line. What made a bigger difference, though, is that while I seeded myself in the back of the field, there were a bunch of slower swimmers in front of me. So, for at least a few hundred yards, there was a LOT of bumping (a nice way of saying "kicking and hitting") going on, with few open areas to avoid the fracas. Gradually, as the swim went on and the field spread out, there was less bumping. After turning at the buoys marking the far end of the course, it was pretty much clear sailing.

My swim was going extremely well, thanks, I believe, to all the open water swim training I had done over the summer. I looked at my watch at the

turnaround and saw that I reached it 35 minutes. That was a very pleasant surprise.

The return leg was slightly longer than the “out” leg, and there were fewer opportunities to draft off of those ahead of me, so the complete swim took longer than simply twice the out leg. I thought I had a great swim, but I was disappointed to see 1:27:00 on my watch at the swim exit. A year ago at Redman Triathlon in Oklahoma City, I finished the swim in a personal best 1:16:00. I was hoping to do about the same at Silverman, since every minute saved was one that I could use to beat the time cutoffs for the bike course, if necessary.



*The swim exit. Note the Operation Rebound athletes behind me waiting to start their race. Their wheelchairs and an assistance dog can also be seen.*

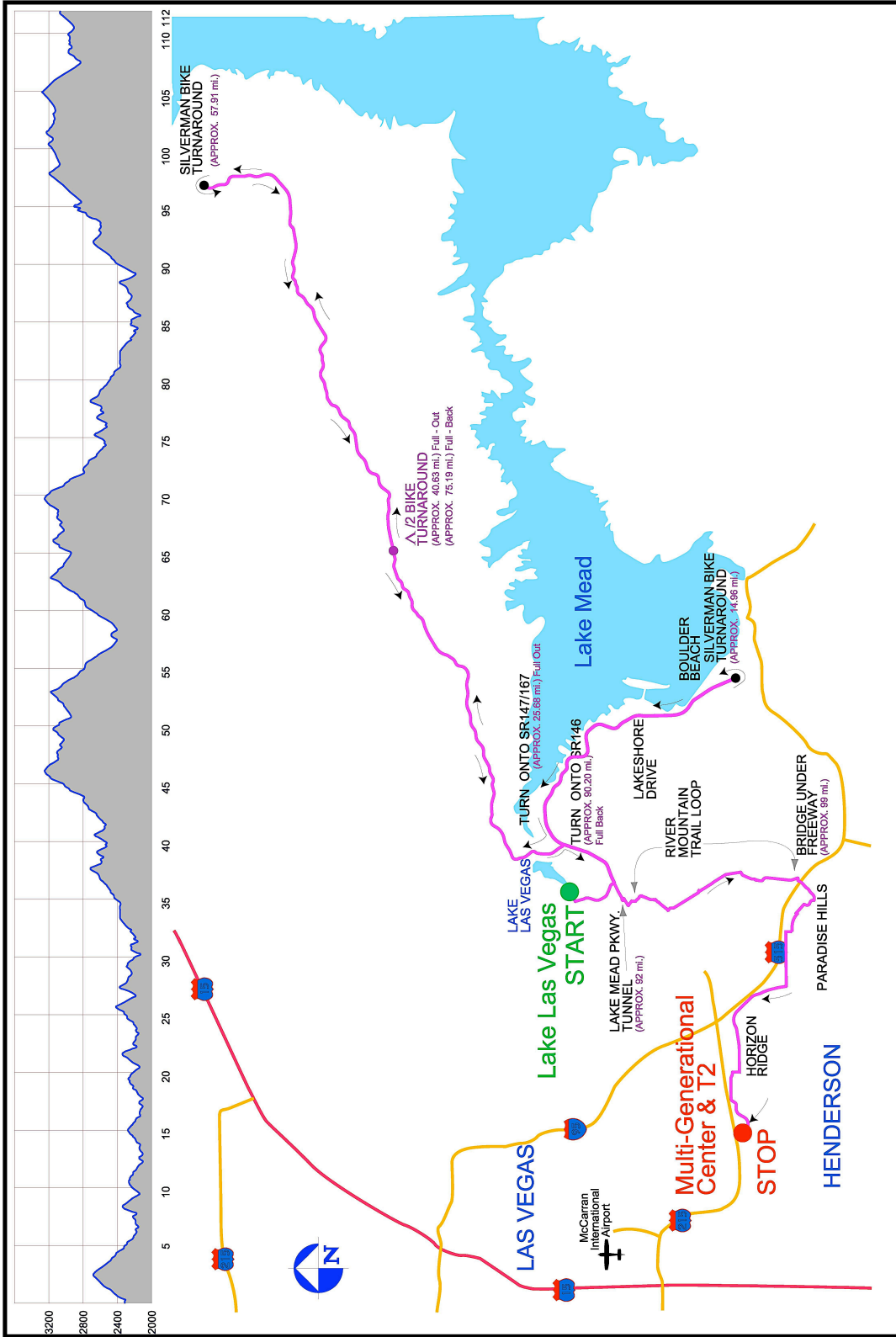
My transition time was about 10 minutes. Part of my slowness is that I had to stop at a porta potty to empty my bladder. It was so full during the second half of the swim that swimming was very uncomfortable. I was either extremely well-hydrated before the race or I drank a few gallons of Lake Las Vegas, or so it seemed.

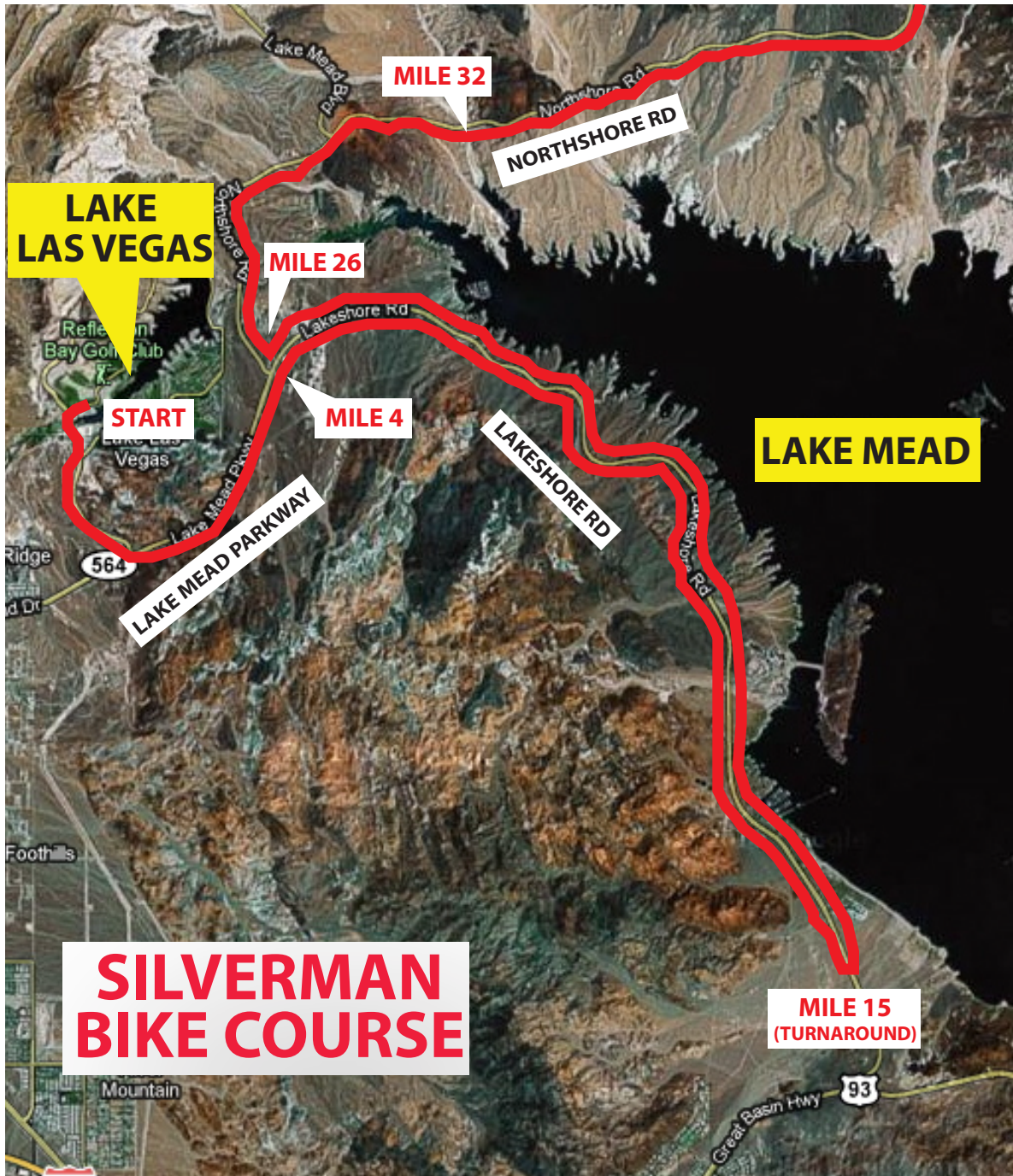
I jumped on the bike at 8:37 a.m., or 1:37:00 on the race clock.

## **The Bike**

The swim and the run are certainly challenging parts of a triathlon, but for me--and I suspect everybody else-- Silverman is all about the bike. Thanks to unrelenting hills for much of its 112 miles, the bike course is unbelievably hard. The amount of climbing on the course (i.e. the cumulative total of all the uphill) is around 9,500 feet. No other iron-distance race in North America, and perhaps the entire world, has that much climbing. It's one reason why this race is so special. Almost no other race can challenge you like Silverman. No one, from the first finisher to the last, finishes Silverman without suffering immeasurably. And, if you're lucky to finish (and, yes, some luck is necessary), almost no other triathlon finish will ever compare favorably to that achievement. People race for all kinds of reasons, but the challenge of finishing is what draws me to Silverman.

# SILVERMAN - 112 Mile Bike Course 2010





## ***The Bike -- Miles 0 to 32***

The first few miles of the bike course take you from Lake Las Vegas to the Lake Mead National Recreation Area via the Lake Mead Parkway. The first two miles of the course are all uphill--a cruel introduction as to what's to come. Once inside the Recreation Area, the Lake Mead Parkway turns into Lakeshore Road, which runs south along the Lake Mead shoreline. After turning around on Lakeshore Road at the 15-mile mark of the course, we came back 11 miles to get on Northshore Road at the 26-mile mark. Northshore Road would then be our battleground for the next 64 miles.

The first 32 miles of the bike course are a steady dose of rolling hills. There are a couple downhills (around miles 22 and 27) where you can easily reach speeds in excess of 40 mph, but everything else is fairly gradual. Most hills are equivalent in grade to a typical highway off-ramp or on-ramp. The road surfaces are generally very good.



*The aid station somewhere near the 20-mile mark offered a special treat, although I didn't have time to indulge.*

## **NUTRITION AND HYDRATION**

I made sure in the early miles on the bike to drink plenty of Gatorade and water and eat enough energy gels and bananas to overcome the nutrition and hydration deficits from the long swim, and to prepare myself for the long bike ride. If you do not stay on top of your nutrition and hydration throughout the bike course, you are either going to DNF or suffer terribly. You might be able to get away with it at other races, but you can't at Silverman. You'll pay the price, one way or another.

I felt like I was always walking a tightrope when it came to nutrition and hydration. There were bad consequences for consuming too much (i.e. stomach shut-down and bloating) or too little (dehydration and "bonking"). You try to use your experience from training and racing as a guide, but you still have to exercise some judgment. You can't replicate the Silverman course or conditions in training, and there are no other races quite like it that you can draw on for experience.

Going into the race, my strategy was to try to cover at least 14 miles every hour on the bike. A 14 mph average would allow me to beat the bike cutoffs at the 92-mile mark and at the end of the bike course (112 miles), with some time to spare.

In the first hour on the bike, I managed to cover 16 miles. That was encouraging to me, since I only managed 15 miles in the first hour back in 2007. Every mile over 14 in an hour became part of the cushion I was hoping to have later on in case of a flat tire, a mechanical issue, or a physical problem that slowed me down.

I covered 15 miles in the second hour, giving me additional comfort. Everything was going well, and I was feeling fine.





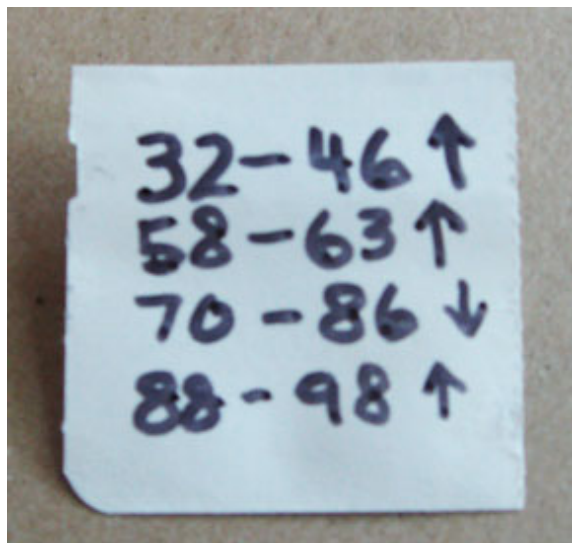
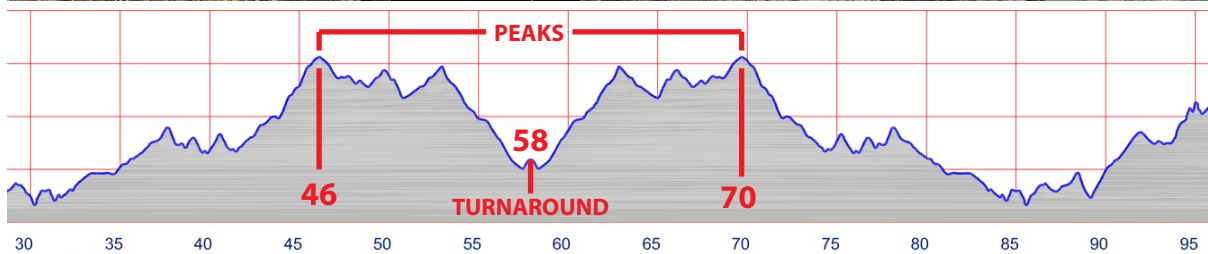
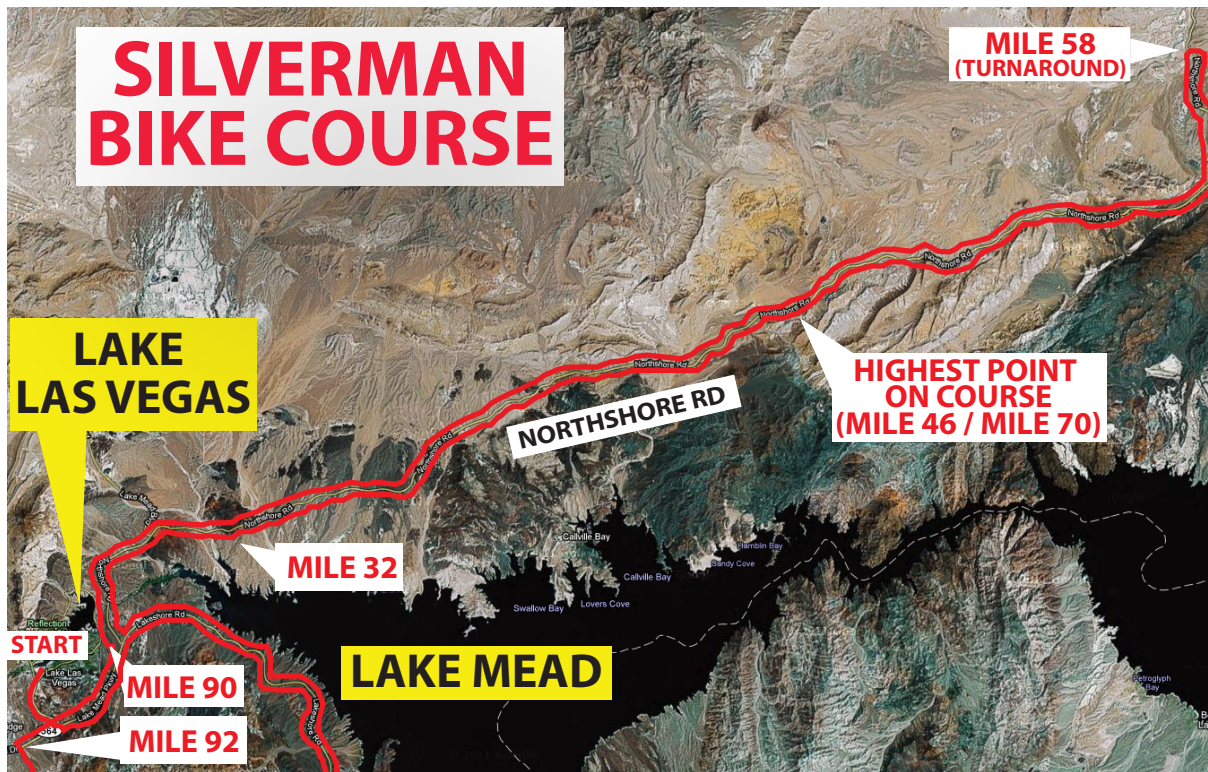
*Feeling pretty good on the bike, with Lake Mead in the background (above). Look closely, and you'll see I was wearing a red wristband. It read, "RELENTLESS" (left).*



A spectator around the 40-mile mark. I'm not sure if she was telling me I was #1. At least she wasn't flashing a different finger.

### ***The Bike - Miles 32 to 46***

The first extended climb was from miles 32 to 46, a climb that was virtually nonstop. Parts of it were gradual almost to the point that, unless you really looked far off into the distance, you'd think that it was flat. However, you could get another clue by the speed at which you riding, which was slightly less than you'd do on a flat road.



*Right next to the GPS unit on my bike, I taped a list of the extended uphill and downhill sections on the bike course. There just seemed to be a nice mental benefit from knowing that a long uphill section was ending soon, or a downhill section was not far away. I like to know as much possible about the situation, especially if there's good news ahead.*

I reached mile 44 at the 3-hour mark. The 13 miles covered in the last hour was just below my 14 mph goal, but since they were virtually all uphill, I wasn't bothered by it.



*The scenery in the Lake Mead National Recreation Area is spectacular. I had a camera with me and snapped these around the 40-50 mile mark of the bike course.*

## ***The Bike - Mile 46 to the Turnaround at Mile 58***

Except for a few uphill climbs, the bike course ran downhill for the next 12 miles to the turnaround at mile 58. The last five miles of that descent were especially fast and allowed my legs some time to recover. They also helped boost my average speed and give me additional cushion toward meeting the bike cutoffs.

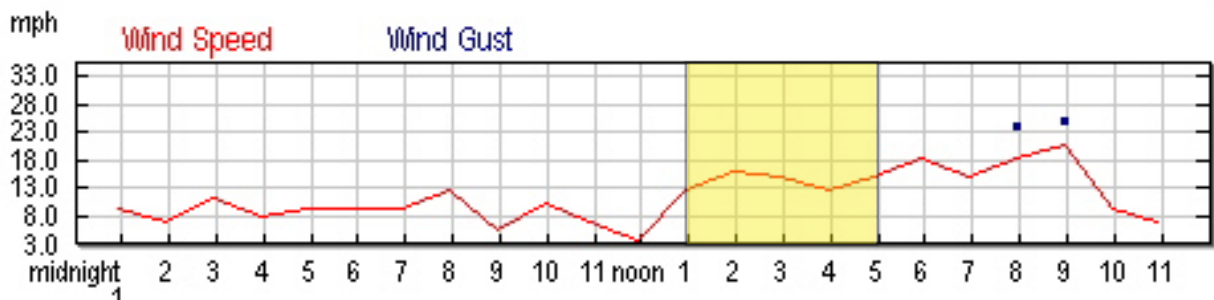


I reached the turnaround in 3:55 from the start of the bike course, at approximately 12:40 p.m. My average speed on the bike was about 14.5 mph to this point. Everything was going well.

I had just over three hours to cover the 34 miles to the first bike cutoff. At 3:45 p.m., the course would be closed at mile 92, and no one arriving after that time would be allowed to continue on. The second cutoff was at the end of the bike course. You had to be there by 5:00 p.m., or you wouldn't be allowed to continue on to the run course. I thought I had enough time to make both cutoffs, but there was still a long way to go. I didn't have any time to waste. I kept very close tabs on my watch and odometer.

## ***The Bike - The Turnaround at Mile 58 to Mile 92***

That long, fast, five-mile descent just before the turnaround was now a long, slow, five-mile uphill climb. But what suddenly became apparent after the turnaround is that not only would I be facing some serious uphill climbing, but also a strong headwind. On a bicycle, there's nothing more punishing than to have to ride uphill into a headwind. After the race, I learned that the wind was blowing from the south at 13-15 mph all afternoon. Unfortunately, nearly all of the course after the turnaround headed south or southwest. Though I obviously didn't know it at the turnaround, I would be facing a strong headwind for most of the rest of the day. This, don't forget, on a brutally hilly course, too.



*I can't believe my bad luck. The wind was blowing from the south all day. However, in the morning, when it was at my back, it was barely blowing. It wasn't until shortly after noon (when I turned around and headed south) that the wind kicked up to 13-15 miles per hour. For most of the four hours until the 5:00 p.m. bike cutoff (the area in yellow in the chart above), I faced a stiff headwind.*

I have never, ever been so mentally tortured on a race course as I was between miles 58 and 70. (In my opinion, this is the toughest section of the entire bike course since it's the longest and steepest sustained climb in the second half of the course, when your legs have pretty well been trashed.) I was pushing as hard as I could--and suffering miserably--and yet I was constantly falling behind where I needed to be. I knew that time was slipping away, and I started seriously thinking that I might not be able to meet the bike cutoffs. It's a horrible feeling to have. I clearly remember thinking at one point that I never want to do this race again.

At 2:00 p.m., I reached mile 75. It had taken 1:25 to ride 17 miles--an average of only 12 miles per hour. This was devastating to the cushion I

was hoping to have in meeting the cutoffs. I was now just barely above a 14 mph average after nearly 5-1/2 hours of nonstop pedaling.

I had 1:45 to ride 17 miles to the mile 92 bike cutoff. Since most of those miles were downhill, I thought I could make it, but I was growing more concerned about the 5:00 p.m. cutoff at the end of the course. The less cushion I had at mile 92, the less I'd have available for reaching the end.

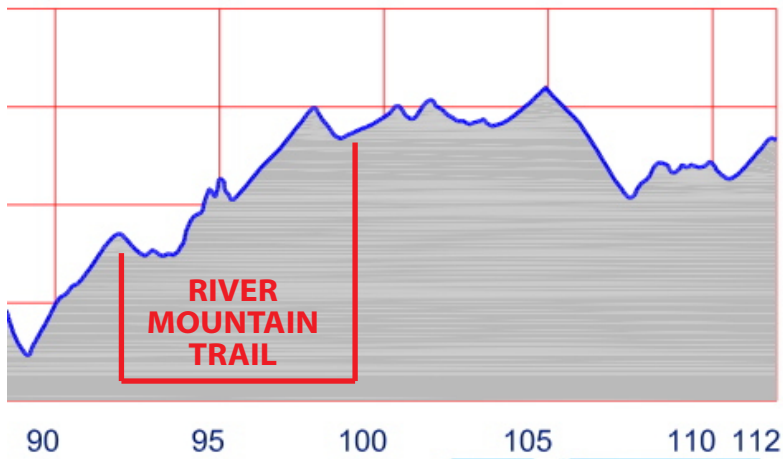
Things weren't going well, thanks mostly to the unrelenting headwind. But, as bad as things were, they were about to get much worse.

The signboard marking mile 75 was on a steep uphill. I was only a few yards past the sign when I suddenly suffered a massive cramp in my right leg's quadriceps. I immediately knew I was in serious trouble. The thought crossed my mind that my day might be done right there. Somehow, I managed to unclip from my pedals and get off the bike without falling over. The pain was excruciating. I could barely walk to the shoulder of the road. I tried to stretch my leg and walk off the cramp. I massaged the quads for a few seconds until it felt loose enough for me to walk the bike up the remainder of the hill. I immediately took some electrolyte tablets, which I had been taking regularly throughout the bike. (My nutrition and hydration plans had been working fine all day.) Looking back, I think the cramps were simply a matter of muscle fatigue. (Coincidentally, I had some minor cramping back in 2007 just a few miles earlier on the course.)

There was no way I was giving up. I had come too far--literally and figuratively--to call it a day. When I reached the top of the hill, I got back on the bike and resumed riding. However, I had to do everything I could to avoid more cramping. I would have to favor my left leg for a while, and be very careful not to overexert my right leg, especially on later hill climbs. The clock was still ticking, and time was such that I couldn't just take it easy. It was torture trying to push myself under these conditions, all the while not knowing whether I'd make the cutoffs.

Some how, some way, I reached mile 92 at 3:20 p.m., 25 minutes before the cutoff. I managed to avoid any more cramping, even on a couple of steep climbs between miles 85 and 92. I rode those very carefully.

# The Bike -- Miles 92 to 99





I knew from my 2007 experience that, between mile 92 and the end of the bike course at mile 112, I'd probably lose about 15 minutes of whatever cushion I had remaining. Since I reached mile 92 with 25 minutes of cushion, that meant I would only have about 10 minutes of cushion at the bike finish if everything went exactly as it did in 2007. Ten minutes, though, was too close for comfort, especially with the continuing headwind and a questionable right leg.

At mile 92, the course veers off the Lake Mead Parkway and crosses back under it through a tunnel that leads to a paved walking and bicycling path called the River Mountain Trail. The bike course includes a seven-mile section of the trail. You might think that a city trail like this would be an easy ride, but this is one of the most dreaded parts of the entire Silverman course.

The first two miles or so of the trail include the notorious "Three Sisters"--three short but very steep (18% grade) hills that would be brutal on a leisurely bike ride, but are absolutely nightmarish after having ridden 92 miles on a horrendously hilly bike course.

I somehow rode up the Three Sisters in 2007, but I simply couldn't take a chance on doing that this time. I think I would have almost certainly cramped up. It wasn't worth the risk. So, I walked the bike up these hills, knowing full well that I was losing perhaps a minute or two on each one.

Once past the Three Sisters, the trail continued due south, straight into the maddening wind that was blowing incessantly in my face. It was during these next five or six miles that I become more demoralized than I've even been during a race. If there's any place on this course where your spirit can be broken, it's here.

The trail looks flat, but it's a deception. It actually rises very gradually. It also has no protection whatsoever from the wind. Between the wind and the false flat, you can't believe that you're pedaling as hard as you can but only traveling 10 miles per hour. Add in the fact that you're traveling below the speed you need to reach the end of the course by 5:00 p.m., and you realize your year-long dream of finishing is slowly and steadily slipping away. Near the very end of the trail, I hit bottom. I was so tired, physically and mentally, from pushing myself so hard for the last forty miles that I lost sight of what I was doing, and ran off the edge of the trail onto some gravel. I stopped for a few seconds, gathered myself, then continued on.

The trail ended at mile 99 of the course. I reached it at 4:00 p.m. It had taken me 40 minutes to travel just 7 miles, an average speed of just 10.5 miles per hour. I had exactly 60 minutes to cover the remaining 13 miles or my day would be over. Basically, I had no cushion left. For the next hour, I would ride with the cloud of a possible DNF hanging over me.

### ***The Bike -- Miles 99 to 112***

After finishing the trail section, the bike course headed mostly west and a little north toward the bike finish at the Henderson Multi-Generational Center. I would *finally* no longer have the wind pushing at me. However, there were still a bunch of rolling hills to contend with, and my legs were utterly trashed. While riding 13 miles in one hour might be easy any other time, this was going to be a big challenge. Nevertheless, I was giving it everything I had left. There was no reason not to.

Over the last 13 miles, there were moments when I was riding well, but some of the uphill seemed like mountains. They hurt my progress considerably. I think the situation would have been much better for me if these last miles were perfectly flat. That is, the downhills didn't help me nearly as much as the uphill hurt me.

At 4:30 p.m., I reached mile 104. (Needless to say, I was looking at my watch and odometer constantly, doing the math to see if I would make the cutoff.) It had taken 30 minutes to ride just 5 miles, and now I needed to cover 8 more miles in the same amount of time. Without a miracle, that didn't seem possible. It was about that time I started to realize that I wasn't going to make the 5:00 cutoff.

The official sunset was at 4:39 p.m., and it was getting dark quickly. It would only be another 20 minutes before it was completely dark.

I saw a couple of other racers in the last miles. The first was a female, whom I was passing. I tried to offer words of encouragement, but she knew she wasn't going to make it. She didn't say as much, but I could tell. A guy passed me with only a mile or two to go. He said to me, "Looks like we're not going to be running a marathon". It was a nice way of saying something we both knew. We had DNF'd.

I was about two to three miles from the finish when 5:00 p.m. came and went. I continued pedaling up the seemingly endless, gradual hill to the Henderson Multi-Generational Center, and reached the bike finish at 5:15.

I had been on the bike for 8:36. My average speed was 13.0 mph.

### ***The Bike Finish***

As I was turning into the driveway of the Multi-Gen Center where the bike finish area was located, I looked at the faces of the volunteers standing there. I could tell that they didn't want to have to tell me that I failed to make the cutoff, and thus wouldn't be allowed to continue on to the run course. I know that if I were in their position, I would rather bite off my tongue than have to tell that to someone after they've worked so hard and came so close to finishing. To let them avoid having to say anything, I started off the conversation. Almost apologetically, I said that I tried as hard as I could, but that the wind got the better of me. They were very sympathetic, and said that they had heard about the wind from many others before me. They removed the timing chip from my ankle, and then took my bike to the bike racks for me. I was officially done for the day. I had DNF'd, and that hurt worse than any pain I was feeling at the moment.

### **The Run**

Sadly, I have nothing to report.

### **Post-Race**

Immediately after finishing, I got my street clothes bag and headed to the transition tent to change. As I sat there, I was so stiff and sore that I could barely move. It must have taken me at least twenty minutes to change clothes.

I went to get some food, and then collected my bike and gear and headed for the shuttle bus that took us to Lake Las Vegas to get our cars. I went back to the hotel, hauled my bike and all of my gear up to the hotel room in two trips, unpacked my gear bags, took a shower and then drove over to a nearby KFC for some fried chicken. I went back to the hotel and sent some e-mails reporting the bad news before climbing into bed.

I felt fine (as in "not sick") back at the hotel room. I'm sure I would have been in worse shape had I run/walked the marathon and finished the race, but given the chance to do so, I would have continued on, even if it meant I wouldn't be an "official" finisher.

## **The Difference That 30 Minutes Can Make**

There was one crucial difference between Silverman in 2010 and 2007 that made all the difference to me. The bike finish cutoff was 5:00 p.m. in both years, but the race starting time was different--7:00 a.m. in 2010, versus 6:30 a.m. in 2007. Thus, at the start of the 2010 race, I had only 10 hours to meet the 5:00 p.m. bike cutoff, versus 10-1/2 hours in 2007. This turned out to be absolutely critical. Everything else being the same, had the race started at 6:30 a.m. in 2010, instead of finishing the bike 15 minutes beyond the cutoff, I would have finished with 15 minutes to spare. I'm not complaining about the later race start, but the consequence of maintaining the same bike cutoff time is worth noting.

## **Second Guessing**

In the hours and days immediately after the race, I kept asking myself where I could have saved fifteen minutes to make the 5:00 bike cutoff. I knew that I hadn't wasted any time on the bike. I was in motion nearly every second for over 8-1/2 hours. I didn't waste time when I cramped up, or when walking my bike up the Three Sisters. I grabbed food and liquids at the aid stations without stopping once. My swim and swim-to-bike transition times were reasonable. I even stopped snapping photographs while riding when time became an issue. In short, I don't know where I could have saved 15 minutes. It's easy to think that maybe I might have made it if I had just pedaled a little faster, but I honestly feel like I did the best I could every minute I was out there. When you're already on the edge, pushing even harder carries additional risks and can prove disastrous. I have no regrets. I did my very best, but unfortunately came up a little short.

## **Awards Ceremony**

I had mixed feelings about driving out to Loews Lake Las Vegas Hotel on Monday morning for the Silverman awards ceremony. On one hand, an awards ceremony is a nice, fitting way to close out an event. On the other hand, seeing everyone else celebrating their achievement of finishing would make me feel worse about my own failure to do so. Unlike most of the people there, I wouldn't be showing up wearing one of the finisher's shirts that were handed out at the finish line the day before.

I decided to go, no matter how painful it was. I was hoping that no one would ask me about my race. No one did, but then I didn't exactly try to mingle with others or strike up conversations about the race with them. I laid low.

It was a very nice ceremony, and I'm glad I attended. Six-time Ironman Triathlon World Champion Dave Scott was the master of ceremonies. Seeing the Operation Rebound athletes receive their awards was particularly worth seeing. They only competed in the half Silverman race, but that was still a phenomenal achievement.



*The front entrance of the Loews Lake Las Vegas Hotel*

## Silverman's Future

Silverman will not be held in 2011. Frank Lowery, Silverman's founder and race director, was awarded the opportunity to host the prestigious International Triathlon Union's Long Course World Championship race. Since the ITU race will be held in November, it would be too demanding for the Silverman crew to organize both events.

While speaking at the pre-race pasta dinner, Frank made no commitment about Silverman returning in 2012. Since shortly after the race, the Silverman website has been saying, "We will be sure to let you know once decisions have been made about Silverman 2012".

When things are left vague like this, there's of course going to be speculation that the race may never be held again. Many, many people--myself included--would be very disappointed if Silverman never returned. There's no other race like Silverman.

Before hearing that Silverman wouldn't be held in 2011, I had no plans to do it. This race is such that you need at least a year to forget how hard it is before you commit to doing it again. Thus, the cancellation for 2011 made no difference to me.

The big question for me is whether I'll attempt to do it again in 2012 (or a later year) if it returns. At this point, I'm not sure what I'll do. This race is extraordinarily tough, and only gets tougher as you get older. (There were only eleven competitors (of 279) who were older than I at this year's Full Silverman, and only seven of them finished.) The reduction in the bike finish cutoff time, from 10-1/2 hours (from the beginning of the race) in 2007 to 10 hours in 2010, will also make it tougher to meet as I get older. I'd hate to have a repeat of 2010, coming so close to finishing after training so hard.

However, Silverman is such a great race and a huge personal challenge that I think I'd miss not giving it another go someday. It's a wonderful experience to be a part of. Finishing it is just the icing on the cake. If I had been told before boarding the airplane in Springfield, Missouri, that I would come home with my first DNF, I would have stepped onboard anyway. I had a great time, and I have no regrets.

If you've read this entire race report, you deserve a finisher's medal!

Jim Glickert  
Osage Beach, Missouri  
July 2011\*

\* Even though I started drafting this report days after the race, I didn't get around to finishing it for eight months. (Cycling is obviously not the only thing I'm slow at doing.) However, my memory of the race is almost as vivid today as it was on race day. One benefit of waiting to finish the report is that I'm writing with a broader perspective of the outcome of the race. The DNF still hurts, but it taught me that as long as I did my very best and gave it everything I had, I have nothing to be embarrassed about.

## Tourist Photos

No trip to Vegas would be complete without doing some sightseeing and taking photos. Here are a few of my favorite photos and memories:

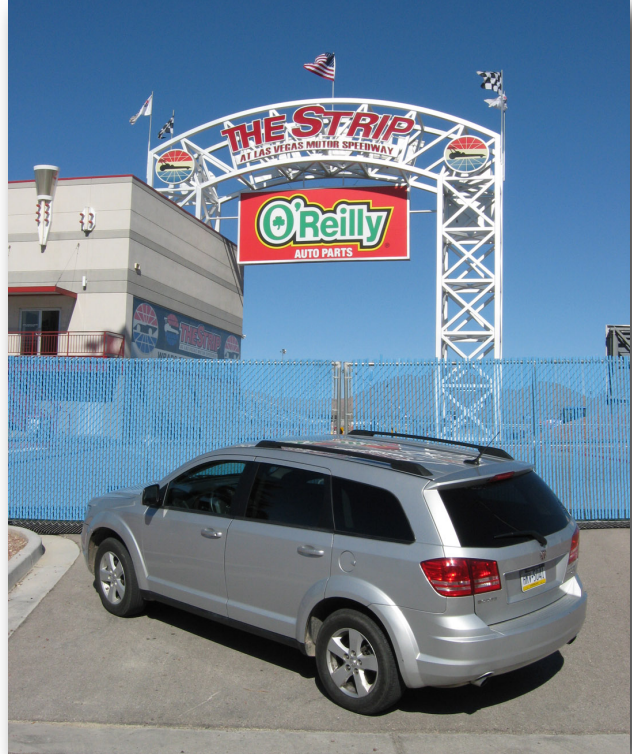


*A Ferrari 458 Italia at the Penske-Wynn Ferrari dealership at the Wynn Hotel. Even a used one now costs about \$300,000. I took the photograph through the store window. They charge \$10 just to go inside the showroom.*



*I never felt a raindrop on my two trips to Las Vegas, but both times I happened to see a rainbow.*





*The Las Vegas Motor Speedway was neat to see. You can drive through a tunnel to get to the infield, and even buy the opportunity to drive a race car or an exotic (e.g. Ferrari or Lamborghini) around the track a few times. I would love to have had a chance to take my rental car down the dragstrip known as The Strip, but the gate was locked.*





*I took lots of photos of Hoover Dam back in November 2007, but this time I was able to photograph it while standing atop the Mike O'Callaghan - Pat Tillman Memorial Bridge. The bridge was under construction when I was there in 2007.*



*The Mike O'Callaghan - Pat Tillman Memorial Bridge. The left end of the bridge is in Arizona, and the other end is in Nevada. There's a pedestrian walkway along the bridge. Look closely and you'll see people on it. The top of the bridge is 840 feet above the Colorado River. The St. Louis Gateway Arch (630 feet tall) would easily fit under it.*



*Lake Mead, viewed from the southwest. Hemenway Harbor is the marina at left. The Silverman swim course was in Lake Mead in 2007. The start was just beyond the marina and headed out to the islands before turning left. The lake level has fallen dramatically over the years, as evidenced by the bleached color of the islands' shorelines. Parts of the lake are so low that boats are unable to navigate them.*



*Just one of the many spectacular rock formations seen while on the Silverman bike course on Northshore Road, on the north side of Lake Mead.*



*A short distance north of the Silverman bike course turnaround is the Valley of Fire State Park. It was getting late in the day and I didn't have time to drive through the park, but I did manage to photograph a few interesting rock formations near the entrance. These photos don't do the beauty of the area justice.*

