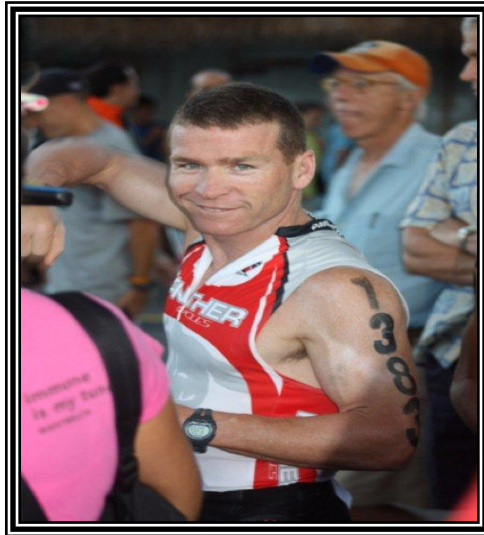


YOU ARE AN IRONMAN



Race day I got up just after 3.30 and had breaky. Got down to transition at about 4.45 and had my numbers marked on my arms and went to pump up my tyres and set my bike up to be race ready. Then I went back out and met Kristen and the gang. I used Matt and Nicole's room in the King Kam Hotel (right at transition) for a toilet which was really handy because the public toilets had lines a mile long.

The big drama for the morning was when they announced that Chrissy Wellington, the three time champ had withdrawn due to illness.



Just after the Pro start I got my swim suit on, said my goodbyes and thankyou's and hit the water. While I was waiting in the water I decided that I wouldn't start my stop watch. I just used the timer as an alarm every 15 minutes to take in fuel. I figured this race isn't about a time for someone like me who's not in the hunt, it's about the history of the place and the battles that have taken place here before me and just enjoying every moment of the day. What can I say about that swim? The gun went off and all hell broke loose. After about 200 mtrs someone pushed me right under and I got swam over the top of by about 4 people. I just had to hold my breath and try and find an opening in the mass of bodies to resurface. I didn't really get any clear swimming

space other than a few short spurts of about 30-50 meters here and there all the way out to the turn around boat. Just after the turn around, I swallowed a gob full of sea water and had to take it easy for a while so I didn't full on spew. It wasn't until about half way back in that I found a bit of clear water down the outside of the pack where I could actually just swim without being smashed. I exited the water in about **1:05** which was ok.

Onto the bike now and at about 8.00 in the morning it was already starting to get really hot. I couldn't believe how fast they all were here. If you sat on 45 km/h on the flat your group just rides away from you. Plus you get overtaken by big Germans with funny names and eight foot seat posts all day. I never really got comfortable on the bike and felt under pressure all day from the 40km mark. The road temperature out there was 58 deg and air was 44 deg. Then throw in those winds out at Hawi and it makes for a crazy place. I could see the waves on the water coming in from miles out in the ocean and it was obvious that it was heading our way. I was praying that we would beat it to the Hawi turn around, but really there was no chance. It hit us about 30 kms before Hawi. It was like on the DVDs that you see of this race with all the bikes leaning into the wind at an angle and the smaller people getting blown off the road. Once we turned around we got a good tailwind down the hill then massive crosswinds back to the start of the Queen K Hwy. Then as you turn back onto the Queen K there were dirty cross winds for the 55 km grind back into town. I was under the pump all the way. The heat and wind just sucked the energy out of you. I rode about **5.15** which was not to bad.



I wasn't sure what the marathon was going to be like after that ride. I got out ok and for the first couple of miles felt pretty good because all the crowd in town gets you pumped right up. Once I started to head out Alii Dve the energy started to drop away big time. I just went through every aid station taking everything on board. It went something like this every single mile- new icy sponges in the front of my top, two cups of ice down the back of my top, drink cup of water, drink cup Gatorade, suck down gel, drink cup of coke, another Gatorade, another water then up the road to the next aid station. I just felt I needed as much fuel in the body as I could hold down. My guts handled it well so I stuck with it. I ate a salt stick every second mile too.

When I got back to town at Mile 11, I was so sure I would walk up the Palani Dve hill, but there were so many spectators there including all my support crew you just couldn't do it. When I got to the top of Palani and on to the Queen K some demons raised their heads and I was starting to ask myself a few questions. It was here I realized I may never get the chance to come back and compete at this massive event ever again and I need to dig deeper into the barrel than I had ever been before and finish this race off with no regrets. So I just went about turning it over from aid station to aid station and followed the same routine filling the tank at each one. At about Mile 16 I felt the



energy start to drop away again. There's no crowd out at this point to lift you up and it's a pretty lonely and harsh environment. I walked through the next aid station so I didn't miss out on any of the goodies on offer. It did the trick and I started to feel a bit better.

When I got down into the Energy Lab I grabbed 2 Red Bull shots out of my special needs bag and smashed one into me straight away. I still reckon they taste like shit but they do flick a switch of instant energy. Running up out of the Energy Lab I got a nice little boost when a message from Kristen and Milly came up on a big digital screen that Ford had set up out there. It read "**1383 Bob Brace turn it over. Nearly home. Love K & M**". On the way back down the highway to town I ran past some poor girl stuck between aid stations and obviously desperate scrounging on the ground. She had some salt capsules and had picked a sponge up off the side of the road and was trying to suck water out of it to swallow the capsules. I didn't wear a fuel belt or I would have given the poor girl a drink, she was gooooooneskis. I saved my second Red Bull until the 23 Mile mark (there was no way she was getting that baby off me) and used it to kick me home. I have to say I got used to running to mile markers instead of kms and it dead set feels alot better when you've only got 3 miles to go rather than 5 kms (sounds stupid I know).



When you get closer to town the crowd starts to build on the side of the road and everyone is screaming out your name. This goes on for about 3 kms but it really peaks when you drop down the hill and on to Alii Dve. Melissa Brown gave me the Aussie flag here and I left my hat and sunnies with her. Coming down that finish chute is what it's all about. The crowd is 10 deep and going ballistic. Troy and Kristen were right down the end near the line. Hearing that American voice of Mike Reilly call out "**Bob Brace You're an Ironman**" was so cool. I've heard his voice so many times on TV and here he was calling me home. Priceless!

It's such a gruelling day and it makes it so rewarding just to reach that finish line. I ended up running about **3:35** which was great in the end and overall did a **10:02** which I'm really happy with.

I got the best buzz out of seeing the Aussie pros out there smashing up the world's best. I was a bit shocked but excited when I saw Macca leading them out to the energy lab. Then I saw Crowie not long after and he looked like he was really motoring and I thought he was a good chance but they were obviously moving too quick up the front. It gave me goose bumps being out on the course with those guys. You normally only see them in the magazines.

I had an ice bath and a massage after the finish. Then some pizza and ice cream before catching up with Kristen and Milly and the rest of the crew.



We collected my bike and gear and went back to the room and had a shower before going back down to the finish line to cheer home the rest of the field coming in after dark. We stayed until the last finisher crossed the line with about 39 seconds to spare before the 17 hour cut off time at midnight. We also saw a triple amputee finish (missing both legs and one arm) , an eighty year old man do a 1 hour PB, and some other battlers who you can't help but be inspired by.

It was a great trip that I will never forget. If you ever get the chance to either race or watch this event you must do it once in your lifetime.



