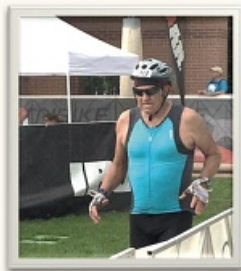


A Day Unlike Any Other Day



The Personal, Physical, and Spiritual Journey
to Do An Ironman

Marvin Dittfurth

*This is the story of my attempt,
my personal, physical, and
journey, to complete an ironman
distance triathlon at an advanced
age.*

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I signed up: Ironman Texas, April 22, 2017

It had to be a gift from God that I held it together month after month with the heavy training. Aside from the bad knee, I was still standing and relatively uninjured as it came down to the last few weeks. The final weeks would be brutal, high-volume stuff, and I was already fatigued by all the previous training. I worried and questioned that I would survive those last few weeks. I was so close. If I just could get through this last part of the training intact, it could be my absolute best chance to make it to an ironman start and, God willing, finish Ironman Texas.

Though the training exhausted me, I surprised myself that I still managed to get out there and get it done each day. I was doing this! One day after another, then another. It was like that same survival mode mentality that I sometimes dropped down into at the end of some tough marathon, one step then another.

The bad knee did not heal completely. I still limped and had a pitifully slow run. The long training runs made the knee pain worsen, and each step would become painful to put down. It would take an

exceptionally good bike ride to build time enough to compensate for my miserable run and make the seventeen-hour cut-off.

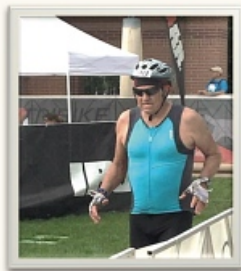
The absolute enormity of all this drove the point home that there was no way I could have withstood this level of fatigue and endured all of this long and arduous training on my own. I could not make sense out of it, but I could see His hand in it. This was where God had led me. Why? How could He possibly use me and this ironman effort for anything of eternal consequence? Doubtful, I am the first believer not to understand. "My ways are past finding out." I can believe that. Yeah, no matter; whatever, I was in.

Ironman Texas 2017 - my best chance. After years of trying and failing to get to the starting line of Ironman Texas, I found myself a week away from going to pick up my packet for the event. It was less than ten days from getting in the water: beginning the event for the first time. No one was sick. No one was in the hospital, and there were no personal dramas to draw my force away. It was scary that things were going so well. I was getting rested little by little. A recent run of an hour and twenty minutes was painless. Even though I was several years older than

when I first ventured into this failure-fraught journey, I believed this year was my best chance. Was I being blessed?

Worry and fear about what could go wrong just wore themselves out on me and finally matured into a dull concern. Down there somewhere, I must have been very scared, but I did not feel it. My training times indicated that I did not have a good chance of finishing within the cut-off times. But I had a chance at least, and I was at peace with that. However, this turned out, whether broken down on the course or crossing the finish line, my dream was to finish this finally and be a testimony of the power of God to accomplish seemingly impossible things with seemingly improbable people: like me. If I could do that and get that "well done" from God, I would say that I had been blessed.

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