

FSAE and the NYC Triathlon

By Paul Martin



"...pushing to the line is the best way to win any race."



Just a few hours after addressing the FSAE Annual Conference in Panama City Beach, I departed the Marriott in the best of moods. My experience there—meeting wonderful people, jogging along white sandy beaches, motivated by Simon Bailey’s powerful message, and expressing my own outlook on life to an energized crowd – was the perfect launch for my next endeavor: *the New York City Triathlon!*

Set High Goals

FSAE motivated me to work hard. It was this concept that had garnered me world championships in triathlon and cycling. Now it was time to shift my mindset from “talk” to “walk,” or should I say “bike, swim, and run.”

After the Friday keynote, I landed at the Boston airport very late and made it to my own bed by midnight. Early Saturday morning I was headed to NYC with my wife and son. We pulled into town, registered for the race, and packed away a high-carb pasta dinner.

The hotel’s wakeup call came at 4 a.m. and I made my way in the dark to 79th Street and the Hudson River for the start of the New York City Triathlon.

Respect for Adversity

The race-within-the-race is the Physically Challenged National Championships. Fifty-eight athletes showed up with parts missing, unresponsive limbs, or eyes not quite up to snuff. This constituted the largest number of disabled athletes to ever show up at a triathlon. ...ever in the history

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So I ran hard through the first three miles of the 10k run before my stump pain called for a re-donning of the prosthesis to alleviate the pain.

I was able to get right back at it—at a slightly quicker pace for another mile or so before my stomach cramps reached a point that I had to stop to alleviate them and catch my breath. I continued up the steepest climb in Central Park as my stump pain gradually returned.

I desperately wanted to make it to the finish line without further delays, but “Stumpie” was really starting to scream. With one last unavoidable reboot with half a mile to go, I saw the blood shed by the quarter-sized blister at the bottom of my residual limb.

As I mentioned to the audience at the FSAE conference, dedication and commitment have been my cornerstones of success; the pain that accompanied that blister might slow me down, but it wasn't about to stop me.

Seeing the Finish Line

Still no One Arm Willie in sight! I donned the leg and pushed it as hard as I could. At 300 meters to go the race takes a 180-degree loop where I was able to get a good view down the course and, finally, with 100 meters to go, I felt I had it. As I mentioned earlier, pushing to the line is the best way to win any race.

With a finish time of 2:15:22—14 seconds short of my personal best—I was once again reminded that a little hard work goes a long way!

Larger Goals

And if it is meant to be, it's hard work that will carry me to the 2008 Beijing Paralympic Games to represent my country on the bike next year. ■

Note: Paul Martin's progress and book are available at www.onemansleg.com. He can be contacted at paul@onemansleg.com for speaking engagements.

My competitors included eleven other below-knee amputees and the legendary One Arm Willie—a world-class runner. He and I have done battle in many races and I've only beaten him once.

At the halfway point on the bike, I held onto a 90-second lead. Upon dismounting I was up by two-and-a-half minutes. With no other amputees close by, I knew it would once again come down to the two of us.

The Winning Plan

I learned long ago that pushing to the finish line is the most certain way to win a race (in business as well as at triathlons.)

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of the world! [If you were not at the FSAE Annual Conference, you should know I am a below-knee amputee.]

We lined up on the pier. The race director called us into the water and advised us to “hold onto the rope” so as not to be swept downstream before the gun went off.

As you might imagine, swimming downstream makes for fast swim times and I exited the water in personal record time. I was the second athlete out and the first to transition onto the bike to tackle 40 kilometers.