

Beat: Sports

IRONMAN ARIZONA DOMINATED BY BRENT McMAHON AND MEREDITH KESSLER

KESSLER LEADS FROM START TO FINISH

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USPA NEWS - It became apparent that Meredith Kessler was bringing a new level of intensity into the race right from the gun. One kilometer into the swim she was already ahead of one of the fastest swimmers in the sport, Dr. Amanda Stevens.

By the end of the 2.4 miles swim in Tempe Town Lake Kessler's lead was up to 1:38 on Stevens and over eight minutes on the women considered to be Kessler's biggest rivals for the title: Heather Jackson and Lisa Huetthaler trailed by 8:36 and 8:44.

Through the first two-laps of the three-loop bike course Kessler put on a bike clinic, pulling away from all of the women in the field except Huetthaler, who managed to reduce her deficit to about 7:28 before a penalty put her in the penalty tent for four minutes.

On the third loop of the bike, though, Kessler started to succumb to the strong headwind and began to lose time on the women chasing her. Heather Jackson, competing in her first IRONMAN race as a professional, made the biggest move, gaining almost six minutes on Kessler to come off the bike in second place, 6:56 behind. Huetthaler was third into T2 (10:15), with Stevens (11:20), and Katy Blakemore (16:12) rounding out the top five.

By the halfway point of the marathon Kessler was running around three-hour pace and was almost 10-minutes up on Huetthaler, who had passed a fading Jackson, who found herself just under 12-minutes behind Kessler.

In Tempe the former Olympian McMahon bridged up to David Kahn about a third of the way through the swim and hung on to the American through the rest of the first leg. After finishing in just over 47 minutes, the two enjoyed a lead of about 50 seconds on a group of five that included Joe Umphenour (USA), Clemente Alonso McKernan (ESP), Tim O'Donnell (USA), Paul Matthews (AUS) and Edo Van Der Meer (NLD). The other three contenders many expected to compete for the title, Maik Twelsiek, Jordan Rapp (USA) and Viktor Zyemtsev (UKR), finished the swim in just over 51 minutes.

Once on the bike Rapp and Twelsiek steadily gained time on the men ahead, but it was during the second loop of the bike that Rapp really put the hammer down taking the lead at the halfway point of the ride.

McMahon stayed in the mix at 3:24.

Like Kessler, though, Rapp found himself struggling over the final miles of the bike, possibly the victim of ambitious pacing into the strong winds. By the end of the bike Twelsiek had moved into second, 1:21 behind Rapp, while McMahon closed the bike strongly to come off in third, 3:23 back, with Alonso McKernan just six seconds behind.

With his 7:55:48 finish (and 2:43 marathon) McMahon became just the 26th man to break the eight hour barrier and the fastest first-time IRONMAN competitor.

And now for our insight view with Anthony DiMauro, our personal Ironman. As I mentioned in my prior articles on this amazing sport event he will be sharing his point of view with us after the race.

Race day. Wake-up call at 3:30 a.m. and arrival at transition area 5:00 a.m. He sets up his bicycle and prepares his nutrition for the race. The lake temperature was officially called at 65° F so a full wetsuit was required for the swim leg. Anthony enters the cool waters 10 minutes ahead of start.

The starter gun goes off precisely at 7:00 a.m. The swimmers hit the water and it's a rough stroke as usual.

Anthony will tell me after the race that he struggled to get a clean start and that his goggles were pulled off at a certain point which made swimming much more difficult.

He exits in 1hr 26'. The volunteers at the changing tent were amazing and very helpful at the bike transition but as soon as Anthony continued for the bike leg he realized things weren't going to be so simple. With winds blowing at 20 mph and gusts up to 30, the thirty-eight mile loops were going to challenge the athletes and drain them from all their strength.

Anthony decided to confront the strong headwind but also to spare his legs for the final run as the wind was taking its toll on the riders. Some of them were literally blown off the road! Anthony plays it safe into the first two miles of the run making good rhythm up until mile eleven when fate seems to turn its back on DiMauro. When I asked him what were his thoughts towards the end of the run he answered, "run-walk-drink-eat, that's all I kept repeating in my mind. The happiest moment of the day was when I entered the finish chute and I saw my wife, my mom, my mother-in-law and our little dog Mr. Flynn." he continued.

I then asked him if he was happy with the final result. "I was surprised to see 12h 26", ten minutes quicker than my last Ironman!" he ended.

When asked if there was someone he wished to acknowledge he immediately exclaimed, "I wish to thank my wife for her unlimited

support, Coach Craig Strong and the Staff of Precision Multisport in Evanston, IL."

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