

Collins Takes Second in Miami Season Opener

By Ben Collins

South Beach, Florida

Sunday, April 13th, 2007

I anxiously awaited the sound of the canon, which would signify the start of the race and my 2008 professional racing season.

My fellow triathletes and I were greeted by a flat Atlantic Ocean along Miami's South Beach. The wind had thankfully died down after a week of pounding the beach with white caps and stormy seas. I looked out at the course before me while humbly standing next to three of my personal heroes; Dara Torres, Chris Lieto and Chris McCormack.

With a bang and a quick sprint to the water, I found myself gliding ahead of the pack and swimming next to the 2007 Ironman World Champion McCormack. At the first buoy, I pulled ahead just slightly and was able to gap the rest of the field. By the end of the short 1/2 mile swim, I was leading the race by 22 seconds.

Right from the start, I pushed hard on the bike and found that maintaining my enthusiastic pace was no small feat. It felt great to be back racing on my time trial bike for the first time since last September. The 18.2-mile out-and-back course crossed two of Miami's most beautiful causeways and had racers zipping through downtown Miami streets before returning to the transition at South Beach. On the second of the two causeways, I saw a long dark shadow gliding over the pavement beside me. Chris Lieto was the man behind that shadow and I picked up the pace to stay with him. Over the final ten miles, I watched five bike lengths grow to ten, and then Chris's silhouette continued to shrink. I came into T2 just over a minute behind the multi-Ironman champion, and another two minutes ahead of McCormack.

The four-mile run followed the boardwalk north for two miles before turning around and coming back along the same curving tiled path. It was my first run in a race situation for this season, and having spent most of my training hours in Seattle, I was not sure how the heat and humidity would play into my performance. At the first mile marker, I looked at my watch to see I had run a 5:10, which felt like a 5:30. Excited to be running so well, I kept my foot on the gas and was able to hold that same pace for the next three miles. Though I never actually caught Lieto, I was able to hold off the incredible McCormack for a second place finish in a time of 1:17:00. Thanks, in no small part, to the K-Swiss Ultra Natural Run shoes I wore; my run was the fastest of the day!



It was an awesome experience to race against two of this sport's most seasoned competitors. I was confident in my swim and cycling legs, but I am most proud of my run. I may soon call myself an exceptional runner without my nose growing ten inches.

Next up is the Mazatlan ITU Pan-American Championships on Saturday, April 19.

Thanks for reading and for your support,

Ben Collins
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