

May 2025

Hello, Friends of EE:

In February I was a guest speaker at an awards celebration in San Diego. After my talk, which of course focused on Exceeding Expectations, we were presented with a gift certificate for a group of EE kids to participate in a **KOZ Triathlon** in San Diego, thanks to the event owners, **Carrie and Tobias Panek**.

At that point, our kids were proficient in reverse triathlons where the swim is short, at the end, and in a pool. Living in San Bernardino, they were unfamiliar with open-water swimming, so this generous offer sounded daunting. But when I presented it to them, there was no hesitation – they were all in!

A group of nine, ranging in age from 14 to 22, took on the challenge.

You’ve seen the training in our previous letters. I had no doubts that the bike and run were not going to be an issue. But the open-water ocean swim was a concern. Fortunately, **Xterra** stepped in and offered to help get the kids wetsuits. We thank them for that; as we do appreciate the wetsuits some of you folks have donated, we didn’t have enough that fit all our kids.

We also were able to upgrade some of our bikes thanks to **The Bike Connection** in San Diego that collects donated bikes, fixes them up and then re-donates them. We were the recipients of several great bikes and we’re grateful to them for those.

We went to a pool for training (thank you, **Palm Desert Aquatic Center**) and my concern grew. The kids had no fear of the water, but they also had very little in the way of swim skills. We then went to the only lake in the area and the temperature was 54 degrees, which is too cold for even an experienced swimmer. We went back to the lake a few weeks later – and it was closed for swimming. Now, I’m really concerned.

We went back to the pool and had a productive swim session followed by a serious discussion about preparing for this event. I was leaving the country for two weeks and the race was three weeks away. I needed them to step up their training on their own.

Upon my return, we had one final swim/bike/run training day. The kids truly had stepped up and trained well during my absence. We had three who prepared for the International distance and the rest were ready for the Sprint (half the distance of the International). They all were ready. Bring it on!

May 4<sup>th</sup> – RACE DAY

5:30 a.m.

It’s dark, a little drizzly and dreary, and the whole scene was a new experience for the kids. But they went about their business of preparing their transitions and themselves. At 6:50 our first three International kids heard the start gun go off and took their first strokes in the chilly ocean. The others followed by age group. We anxiously waited on shore hoping and praying we’d count all 9 of them as they came ashore. Each swam much faster than I had anticipated – they had done the training well!

Onto the bikes where each of them was fully prepared, understanding and following the rules of USA Triathlon racing. When they got on the run, they owned it. Most of these kids race on their school track teams and they are extremely good runners, so they “killed” the last leg of the tri!

At the finish line, we had a few with cramps, but every single one of them had a big smile and the question of the day was: *When can we do another one?*

EE had three podium finishes – 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> in the International and 3<sup>rd</sup> in the Sprint.

Watching these kids during the preparation and the race was a good reminder: **When we give them the opportunity and support, they will exceed expectations every time!**

Enjoy these photos of the pre-race evening and race day.



Briefing. There are a lot of rules in official USA Triathlon racing, and some complicated race-day logistics



5:30 am: A very chilly morning



Our three International-distance competitors:  
Ricardo, Richard and Ahris





The coach with Jose, Eduardo and Kevin



Karla and Yoselin



Richard out of the water



Ricardo next. The kids knew to take it easy on the swim and bike to save their energy for the run.



Ahris



Eduardo



Aramiz



Kevin out of T1



Jose has plenty left for the run



Yoselin happy with a good ride...



...and is off to a flying start in the Sprint-distance run.



Karla is close behind. Look at that form!



Richard is well in the lead in the International distance



But Ahris gives chase!



Ricardo



Kevin gets a low five from the Coach.



Eduardo finishes the Sprint, all smiles and no worse for wear.



Eduardo and Yoselin bang the “first-timers’ gong.”



Kevin with good a strong finish in the Sprint



Richard smokes the finish of the International



Aramiz had a bad cramp but gutted it out to the finish line.  
“Never, ever, ever give up!”



“How’d I do?”



“Third place!”



Yoselin takes third in the Sprint.



Richard and Ahris: First and third.  
This was Richard's first triathlon.



Fantastic job from everybody!  
“So: What did we learn?”



A splendid time was had by all!



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Thanks to all of you who helped make this happen. We're very grateful to you!

-Cherie