

On the weekend of September 22 and 23, 2012, Ginny Poyner, Rachel Chambers, and Patti Sarno competed in the 2012 World Duathlon Championships in Nancy, France. They each were supported by one another and by their mates, Gary Altrogge, Tom Chambers and Chris Sarno. Here are the full versions of their stories:

European Adventure! by Rachel Chambers

Tom and I traveled with Patti and Chris Sarno to Europe for the Duathlon World Championships in Nancy, France from September 18-27, 2012. It was an amazing experience that I have had the thrill of reliving by telling our stories by posting pictures and comments to our Face book walls. I have included some of the photos to tell a better story of our fun along with a few details below.

We stayed in the Radisson Park Inn hotel in Nancy, France as this was the Team USA hotel and had team meetings and rides which were very challenging on the crowded cobblestone streets. We practiced taking the many sharps turns at full speed by watching the corners while other teammates rode. Coach Jim Vance had us doing transition skills in a square next to our hotel. The first morning was 33 degrees for our first run of the course which was from the Place Stanislas through a beautiful park. My race, the Elite Women and Elite Under 23, was at 2pm on Saturday. The Elite race is draft legal and we had 4 laps for the first 10K run, 8 laps for the 40K bike and 2 laps for the last 5K run. At the pro meeting the night before the ITU officials decided that the course was too dangerous and shortened the bike loops. This was concerning as the lead athletes can "lap out" slower athletes and making the laps shorter meant the leaders would be coming around sooner. After the first 10k and 2 bike loops I along with over half the field got lapped out. Our race day was over.

One of my teammates finished 2nd to last place-she survived as we said. After this we regrouped and cheered the Elite Men on Team USA. We watched as several of our guys had severe cramps on the bike and one had to drop out and be lifted off of his bike by 2 ITU officials. After our races, we focused on the age group races that were on Sunday. We cheered Patti and were so thrilled that she looked so strong and steady the whole race. Sunday at 5pm we watched the Elite Relay team which is always very fast paced and thrilling. The next morning we took the Team USA bus to our hotel in Luxemboug and stayed for 3 nights taking the bus downtown and the train to Germany and other cities for touring. The weather was grey and rainy buy we still walked all over and had good times.

Much to our delight, Tom and I were upgraded by British Airways to Business Class and were pampered as we completely reclined on our flight back into Miami.

We had such a memorable time and are so glad that we took on the challenge and pushed ourselves beyond our comfort zones with the best in the world of sport! I learned so much about myself and others. If this sounds interesting to you, I would encourage you to set a goal of training for and qualifying for Team USA World Championships in Duathlon or Triathlon. Now, back to more local racing and time for determining what the 2013 season will look like.

I could not have done it without the unending support of Tom, trip planner extraordinaire. Also my sponsors were so great and so special to me: David and Molly Jackson of New Balance, Dr. Joanne Fava and Dr. Valli Gambina at Chiropractic Sports Medicine, Julian Angus of Tempo Cyclery, Omega3Innovations, Bill and Lennie Serstad,Sue Perry, Dr. Dumas, Dr. Denholm, and Registered Dietitians: Deirdre Odell, Debbie Yates, and Laura Norris.

By Ginny Poyner

At first the idea of writing about worlds sounded easy, and then I thought, how do you explain 21WorldChampionships in one page? It is fun, exciting, motivating, you always meet new friends, enjoy seeing old friends and have lots of memories.

When I first started in 1991, only 2 people per age group were selected for Team USA. A few years later, it was 5 athletes per age group, few years later, 10, then 15 and I think it is 18 now. In the past, I traveled alone, packing my bike, and dragging all my equipment through the airport. No more. I could not do this without Gary.

There were only 8 in my age group this year, but all eight of us had been on the podium more than once. We had quality, not quantity. I have won 4 silver medals, but now I just try to finish

I generally wear my 'American flag' clothes during race week. I keep close watch on the weather, but I still take 'all kinds of weather clothes' - weather run clothes and bike clothes for training and for racing. Plus silk gloves and tops, arm warmers, rain jacket, nutrition for the race, healthy snacks, and food for race day. I include a clock and wash cloth, and items we will not find in other countries. I have a big bag, plus the bike case and Gary has a small carry on.

The drama started when we were packing the bike and Gary found glass in my front tire and my left pedal had lost its bearings. A trip to the shop took care of that, but I worried about new pedals, so we put them on an old bike and I could not click in at all. Monday, on the way to the airport, we stopped by the bike shop and the pedals were tight and needed to be clicked in and out several times. I was to do this as much as possible to loosen them up before the race. This was a worry.

In past years, we have had warm weather all week and then it has turned cold, rained, or snowed on race day. This year was no different. ITU rules state we can not cover our arms or wear compression socks. It is up to the head officials to make any changes. The night before the race, we received an email stating all changes were final. Well, as I was leaving transition area, I was told to go get my compression socks. I think, the older women, starting at 7:30 in 40 degree weather helped with the changes for our group. Once we put on our race clothing we could not make any changes during the race, so that made for last minute decisions. What we started with- we ended with. You need to be flexible at Worlds. Changes take place up to race day. The run and bike courses were changed this year. We were unable to see most of the bike course, because of the traffic.

I had taken it easy two weeks before the race because of back pain & fibromyalgia. I am generally tired a week or two before a race. I think it is my body telling me it is time to taper. I missed my epidural, but I had raced in pain many times before.

I had slept well the week of the race. I felt relaxed and ready to go race morning. The 40 degree temperature, wearing shorts, sleeveless top with a silk shirt under it caused my muscles to tighten up. (fibromyalgia and a fascia disease) I kept thinking my GPS was wrong since my time was so slow. It was like I was running in a wet suit..

Got out on the bike to see the 100 turns, the 10 hairpin turns and the hills that we were not told about. It was the most technical course I have ridden for a while. I used rubber bands and moved one to the right bar for each lap of the bike. Barricades were placed at all the corners to prevent crashing into cyclist going the opposite way, but it made the corners very tight. Coming in for another lap, some cyclist stopped as he was riding into the corner. The spectators and I yelled at him to move. At the same time Gary yelled that it was my last lap, but I did not hear him. I finally got around the guy, came out of the saddle and hammered, forgetting to move my rubber band.

When I came in for another lap, Gary yelled transition, and I yelled I had another loop. WRONG! I bike an extra 5 miles, ran out of fluids etc. During the second run, my left hamstring cramped and then my right adductor. I stopped and tried to stretch. I hobbled hitting my leg with my fist to make it stop

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When I finished, spectators were cheering, because I looked so pitiful. Even the most experienced athletes make mistakes.

It takes a village to keep me going: Dr. Pro, Dr. Fava and Dr. Carmichael , all work on the body to help me move..

By Patti Sarno

So off we went to France!

The Chambers/Sarno caravan headed south to Miami where we caught our plane to Heathrow then on to Luxembourg. Our travel time had been extended due to one of our flights being delayed, which gave us five hours at Heathrow. It went by fairly quickly though since we had each other for entertainment. We finally arrive into Luxemburg about 6:30 Wednesday evening. we then, after an hour wait, had an almost 2 hour ride to Nancy. By the time we got to Nancy it was pretty late, about 9:30PM Nancy time. Total travel time was about 27 hrs or so. We were all hungry so we dropped our stuff at our hotels and headed out to see what we could find to eat. That was a late night!

The next several days we spent learning about the course, going to various meetings, and enjoying the atmosphere and the beautiful architecture and parks around us. Rachel had many more obligations than I did as far as her Pro team went so we pretty much did our own thing during the day, then roaming the area finding our favorite restaurant for the evening. The weather was mostly sunny but a bit chillier than we were used to! Luckily Rachel had loaned Chris and I USTA jackets and warm-ups so we were pretty comfortable the whole time and it helped us fit in with our USA Triathlon peeps. Rachel also did her best to pass on any tips she had gained from her teammates on things like cornering, mounting and dismounting the bike.

The Friday before my race, we had an USAT age group team meeting to go over the race course and the rules (which seemed to change daily). During this meeting they went over recent changes that had been made to the bike course due to safety concerns. I kept hearing the words "dangerous" (and that this was one of the most dangerous courses they had ever had), "be careful out there", and "take your time". After hearing these things over and over it kind of got to me and I had an overwhelming sense of fear, anxiety and excitement that came out all at once as a big ball of emotion. I saw Chris in the Lobby; he had been waiting for me overhearing the meeting. I think he knew I was afraid. I hugged him and sobbed into his shoulder, letting some of the stress out. He told me I would be ok, just take my time. It was good that I still had two days to process all this and come to peace with it, which I did. Looking back now it seems silly that I was afraid but at the time it was very real. I'm so very glad my race was not draft legal - as Rachel's was. That would have been SO MUCH HARDER!

Saturday came; this was Rachel's race day! Her race started at 2 PM it was sunny and just cool enough - probably a little warm on the run but otherwise not too bad - especially for the spectators! We watched Rachel getting ready to race, talking to the other Pros and getting everything just right in the transition area for her race. The Pros had a very different kind of race and the excitement and coverage was awesome. They introduced each athlete individually as they came to the start line. After all the introductions, they were off. We positioned ourselves in the park since the first run had four loops we had plenty of times to see her.

Rachel ran a strong 10K, having to go outside her normal race strategy to try for a good position out on the bike. Unfortunately the lead pack got out ahead of her so she had to ride alone, making her race much more difficult. Since they had shorter laps and more of them (8 compared to my 5) it would be much easier for the lead pack to lap those not in the lead group. Rachel, along with half the other pro racers, were pulled off the course during the race and not allowed to continue once they had been lapped. This was very difficult to watch because I know how much effort all of these athletes put into their training and it was a shame that they were not allowed to finish. Safety was given as the reason for this but I still think it's a shame.

Rachel handled herself very well, although we knew she was very disappointed not to be able to continue. We were able to walk her back to the holding area with her bike to collect her things and continue watching the race. Rachel continued to support her three other teammates, only one of whom actually completed the race after a terrible crash and challenging race.

I give a lot of credit to Rachel for her dedication and commitment to Duathlon as a PRO while also balancing her marriage, career, side work and volunteering that she does, knowing that for some of these athletes, this IS their job.

So now it was my turn.

Sunday morning came dark and early I was required to get my bike and gear into the transition area between 6 AM and 6:30 AM with my race starting at 7:30 AM. I arrived around 6:15 tested the air and felt encouraged because it was actually warmer than predicted. About 30 minutes later though, the wind picked up and the temperature dropped to about 43°. Luckily teammate and new friend, Ginny Poyner was staying close to the transition area so I was able to sneak inside and quickly put on a long sleeve shirt under my uniform. I also wore my bike gloves the entire race. While this did not make the greatest fashion statement I was so happy I decided to do this - I was comfortable the whole race.

Steady and safe, that was how it went for me. Or as Chris said "it was not as exciting (as the pros) to watch, but you were smart."

We were off! Four loops for the first 10K through a park which included a little hill, a larger fountain and quite a few turns but a pretty scenic, spectator friendly course. I was able to control myself on the run, keeping my pace under control, not going out too fast.

I came into transition eventually getting on my bike (I am not known for my speedy transitions). I noticed what looked to be an end cap for my handlebars on the ground near my bike, but when I looked at my handlebars they were plugged so I continued on to the bike course. I took my time on the first loop going as fast as I could but using extreme caution. Once I got through the first lap my anxiety level dropped and I became more and more confident with each loop. I had originally thought I would have trouble keeping track of the loops (since we had to do five) but I found this to be fairly easy - not so true for some others...

The course did indeed have many tight turns. There was one particular S turn going downhill with the pot hole in the middle of the second turn that I hit every time. It was a small pothole so it was okay and I found it was better to hit a pothole than to try to avoid it. I only saw one bad accident but I did hear of others. I was lucky to be on the course first having to negotiate fewer riders until the final two loops when I started seeing men on the course (the wave that started 30 min after mine). It was about this time when I noticed that there was no plug on the end of my aero bar! a light bulb went off in my head that that was the plug I had seen in the transition area earlier. Crap I thought! All this way all the training and I was going to be DQ'd because of my end cap! They kept stressing to us how we would get penalties and DQ's if we broke any rules so I was pretty paranoid. There were a ton of officials on the course riding motorcycles; every time one went by I put my hands over the ends of the aero bars so they could not see!

I was happy to get off the bike although running on the cobblestones in my bike shoes was quite challenging even though it was covered by a matt. I had to go all the way around the transition area to get to my bike rack. As soon as I arrive I tried to find that end cap I had seen, but it was nowhere to be found. About that time two men came up to me and wanted to take my bike and all of my other gear away from me while I went on to the second run. In my head I kept thinking oh no, they are disqualifying me that's why they're taking my bike. As of race morning we were told that our bikes would stay in transition until 10:30 (well within the time I expected to finish) at which time we would have 20 minutes to get our stuff out before the next wave needed to set up. Apparently they changed this rule during the race so they were actually just clearing my bike out of the way for the next wave. I kept saying "why are you taking my bike away", "what are you doing", and they kept telling me that it was okay just go onto the run. It was about that time that I realize there were no other bikes around me in the transition area so I caught on finally that they were just clearing the area. Whew, no DQ! This delay caused me about 10 seconds though, maybe more, which possibly could have gained me 16th Pl., but what the heck.

Once I calmed down and headed out for the second run I realized it would be a challenge but I was going to make it. My legs were tired but all of the cheering people kept me going especially Chris, Tom & Rachel, Joette, Dan and Gary (Ginny's friend). I completed the two laps of the 5K course telling myself to "just do it" and to keep putting 1 foot in front of the other - that would get me there. I crossed the finish and felt a great sense of accomplishment and relief. I got my medal, my Red Bull and was met by my support crew. They all look as though they were really cold, all bundled up! I had made the right choice about my outfit and felt comfortable the whole race. That was a long time for everyone to be out there and I really appreciated that.

After the race I went back to our cute hotel room, took a shower and decompressed then went back down to the race to cheer for our good friend Dan Bergeson who would be competing in the 35 to 39 age group. Later that night we had a celebratory meal at a nice French restaurant and bask in our accomplishments. It was a lovely evening.

The next morning it was time to head to Luxemburg to continue our vacation part of the trip. We left at 6:30 AM getting us into Luxembourg just in time to take advantage of the breakfast bar before it closed! We stayed at the Doubletree and it was very nice. We continued on to tour Luxemburg then we went to Trier Germany the next day and on to the northern part of Luxemburg seeing very scenic beautiful architecture along the way. The fact that it was cold and rainy didn't really slow us down, we enjoyed every moment.

Our trip home was a little more efficient. It went quickly and we arrived back to Miami on Thursday evening about 9:30 PM. We stayed at the hotel as we had arranged to park and ride for free overnight and drove home Friday morning. It was so nice to have most of Friday and the weekend to readjust to our lives before going back to work on Monday.

Once we were home I had a chance to rehash my race, looking at my splits to see how I did. I knew I had placed 17th and that my time was 2:35:46 but I had not seen my splits. I was very happy when I saw them, running faster than I thought I would and my bike was pretty good too, considering all the slowing down and starting up we did. I was 17th in my age group, 10 seconds behind 16th! I was 6th out of 12 USA team members to finish in my age group so I was just where I thought I would be, right in the middle, but right at the TOP for ME! I set out on this journey to push myself outside my comfort zone - and I did - I pushed right on through and came out stronger and smarter!

Thanks to my husband, Chris, who acted as my bike mechanic and travel planner. He did a great job with the bike and also got a lot of great photos on his new Ipad! Thanks also to Tom and Rachel for all of the things you did, including GOING to the race, you made this trip possible for me and made it all the more special! I also want to thank Ginny Poyner for her guidance and support along the way. Ginny was very encouraging and her vast experience as a 20+ year USAT World Championship competitor helped me prepare and enjoy this experience!

By Gary Altrogge

Another successful trip with Ginny to the Du World Championships. As usual the most difficult part of the trip was in the lead up to departure and the stress of dealing with packing the bike, the airline, bike check in, bike box payment, security, and multiple transfers, this year with a new wrinkle. For the first time, after multiple domestic and international flights, the body scanner in Amsterdam picked up the metal in Ginny's back. After practically being strip searched in the open security area and showing the scar on her back we barely made it to our connecting flight. Twenty plus hours after departure we arrived in Luxembourg on time and with the bike box, not always a given. The hotel was on a square right in the center of the old town surrounded by restaurants, Cathedrals, museums, and right on the transition area. We got the bike back together successfully, no extra parts left in the box, and Ginny was able to check it out the next morning, success for the sherpa. . In the several days before the race we had a great time getting with old friends, sightseeing, and generally enjoying the ambiance.

After traveling to 10 + "Worlds" and scores of other races with Ginny, of the two of us I'm probably the more nervous during the race. Is the course wet, are the fast young guys going to cut her off in the corners, will the second run do her in? Of course I am doing things other than worrying; taking pictures and cheering for her and other U.S. participants. However as I said earlier a successful trip, for me, is being at the finish line seeing Ginny finishing the race upright and intact. And of course after all of her injuries I am just so proud of her being there and participating.

By Tom Chambers

Trip to Nancy, France for the 2012 World Duathlon Championship, Luxembourg, and Germany

I love to plan and go on trips so it is great that Rachel was picked to be on the 2012 Elite Women's team. They did not notify her until about two months before the race so I did some quick planning. Usually about 6 days are consumed by the race and being with the US Elite team. We decided to fly in and out of Luxembourg, Luxembourg as it is an hour and a half from Nancy. It seemed like a logical place to make our home base after the race so I researched day trips from Luxembourg. We were limited on time-having just three more nights so this also was a consideration (I always wish we stayed longer).

Going with another couple was fun so we spent much time with Patti and Chris Sarno. We got to stay in the USA hotel because of Rachel being on the team. Even though Rachel had to spend much of her days with the team, we still were able to go out to eat and spend time with the Sarnos. Our hotel had a great breakfast buffet so the Sarnos would join us for this. The Sarnos also decided to fly on our same flights and stay in Luxembourg for the 3 nights afterwards. Fortunately they were ok with my trip planning ideas so we did all of the day trips out of Luxembourg together.

Three days, what can you do in three days? I found a great day trip to Trier, Germany by train that was my favorite day trip. It is just across the border but is definitely German-with a rich history as one of the oldest European cities. It was a Roman capitol and had a population then (80,000) that was almost its present size. It is very walk able from the train station. We also spent one day exploring Luxembourg city which also has old Roman ruins and the Casemates-walls around the old city with many underground tunnels within the walls to explore. They put cannons in openings as it looked down on the town below. There was just one more day and many options to explore. We could have gone to Paris (1 1/2 hours by bullet train), Brussels, or Basel, Switzerland but all would have been difficult to do in one day. I picked taking a train up to Clervaux, Luxembourg which is about 10 miles from the Belgium border. It has a castle that has three museums: One about European castles and models of them, a WWII museum, and the Family of Man exhibit. Unfortunately, the Family of Man exhibit was closed for renovation but the town and castle were interesting to explore. There were many WWI and II battles in Luxembourg so the museum was very interesting. We did not realize that the Luxembourg area is kind of like Seattle and rains a lot. One local said they only have about two weeks of sunshine a year. Even with the drizzling rain, it was great day touring around. We had our ponchos and umbrellas. All in all, it was a great trip-just too short. We had much fun with the Sarnos and a lot of laughs-they are great friends!

We will see what the future brings for Rachel and her racing. We have done several trips based around her racing. I would encourage others to try to qualify for some of the USAT national and world championships. It is great going with the USA team. Now what race will she do next that I can plan for?????

By Chris Sarno

As Patti's main support I can say it was almost as stressful as racing.

I was totally responsible for dismantling, packing, traveling with, unpacking and reassembling her bike in good working order. I must say I was more worried if her race was going to be foiled by a mechanical breakdown vs a sluggish performance. Dismantling and shipping a bike can invite strange things to happen. Bike chains can be out of alignment by 1000th of an inch which results in the chain falling off in the middle of the bike course. Cold air at 50,000 feet in the cargo compartment invites wheel rim tape to contract thus increasing the chance for a flat tire. Despite what "could of " happened, everything fell into place.

Standing around taking pictures was fun but a bit tricky. Getting the right picture angles and saying the right things during video shots was a new experience. It was work but well worth the effort to preserve such a special moment in Patti's life.

Race day temps were in the mid to upper 40's so needless to say I burned many calories staying warm or at least trying to stay warm.

In the end all the effort put forth as support was well worth the effort. Having been in the spot light many times over the years Patti has served this role on my behalf so this time it was my turn. I was happy to be there and contribute some little things for her.