

October 30th, 2016 California SwimRun 12k Sprint Race Report

When you are an athlete who is always evolving and eager for new challenges, nothing is more exciting than seeing a new race format in your favorite city!

My best friend aka life partner, aka bridesmaid, aka favorite person to train with Jenna and I were looking for something to break out of our IRONMAN training routine. We trained all of 2015 together to complete IM Arizona in November 2015 and of course finished and happy with our accomplishment.

However, once the race was over, we were kind of lost.
Unmotivated
Unsure of what to do next

We spent the winter keeping up our fitness, and just happy to be done with our 100 mile bike rides.

Jenna's birthday was coming up, and she noticed a new race right in our backyard (I mean literally, I can look across Mission Bay and see the start of the race).

I loathe, swimming; I mean absolutely just not a swimmer. During our training, I would literally sit in the car while everyone else did open water practice at Ventura Cove. Everyone joked with me like "Kat....you do realize that you have to swim 2.4 miles in IRONMAN".

Anyway, back to the awesome race at hand, the California Swim Run
Jenna has a way of making people do anything
"That sounds like a horrible idea.....what time?"

We signed up for our first swim/run knowing that we are the perfect pace partners.
Jenna and I complement each other really well as athletes, I'm a little bit faster on the bike, and she is a little (more like a lot) faster on the run.

The day before our first swim run race, it poured down rain (ok we're San Diegans, it was more like a drizzle), and it was "freezing" (probably 65 degrees) so I was kind of a in a mood. Texted Jenna the night before and said "ummm yeah....we'll see"

When I got to the race that morning, I completely had it in my mind that I would not be racing which is really unlike me. Jenna even agreed, but nonetheless we checked in, got our swim caps and got ready. You know....just in case.

It was Jenna's birthday that day and I was ready to just drink wine and celebrate instead!

I kind of moped around and complained about the weather, the water temperature, if the rain had affected the water quality, anything I could complain about I did. It never dawned on me that this would be one of the best race experiences I'd ever have.

The race was about to begin so we begrudgingly walked over to the start line with a little nerves thinking we'd just run the course for fun instead of swim, run and race. (again, not a fan of swimming)

At the start, we began to shake out the nerves. It was cold, and we were ready to move.

The race director came over the megaphone and said
"Welcome racers to the FIRST EVER swim run in the United States"

I looked over at Jenna, pulled my swim goggles down to my eyes, and said "OH IT'S ON"

The gun went off and we bolted! I said, "Happy Birthday Jenna!" and she said, "I wouldn't want to celebrate any other way!"

From there, we swam and ran, swam and ran, eight times around Mission Bay, San Diego.

The excitement of this event is so hard to accurately describe. It was just so refreshing to take on a new challenge.

I felt the same way I did when I did my first half marathon, my first triathlon, my first IRONMAN.

But also at the same time, it just felt different in an incredible way. Each race has it's own vibe and you could feel it upon every swim entry and run.

Our enthusiasm grew every time we got out of the water. We even got excited by the added challenge of the rain falling down and hundreds of mini jellyfish in the water. It was like I was experiencing a completely different San Diego.

As I realized this, I reflected on just how grateful I was to even have the ability to race and absorb the encouragement of the other people racing with us.

In the last two miles, I exclaimed, "this is the best thing I've ever done!" And I meant it. Even after countless half marathons, iconic road races, and triathlons, the ability to challenge ourselves this way was so empowering.

We finished the race hand and hand, absolutely glowing!

And so, we have put a stamp on the California Swim Run race to be our absolute hands down favorite race in San Diego.

You heard it first!

Kat Gunsur and Jenna Van Cleve of team Kelp Kabobs

