UH, IT'S SQUIRTING

"How does it look?"

"It's squirting a little. Do you have a Band-Aid or something we can put on it?"

"Yeah, I'll get one out of my riding pack."

That's how it went at the end of my second lap at the '24 Hours of Adrenaline' race up at Hurkey Creek. Rich Griffin, Jennifer and I went up to do the 8 hour solo race. All that means is you get to suffer for 8 hours rather than 24. Yeah like that's gonna happen. This year I was ready for the heat. Yep. I had it all figured out. Gatorade, fruit, chicken, mashed taters and gravy, gels, Goos and Cliff bars. Then there's the extra socks, and jerseys. Yep, I was going for my 5 laps. Last year I got 5 laps and got a 22nd place and I figured to try to get better.

As usual the race started with a foot race. Now I know it's the big Le Mans start to get everybody thinned out by the first climb but folks I'm a piss poor runner to say the least. I bet I was almost last place by the end of the darned thing. Like I said, I'm a lousy runner. So I finally got on Mrs. White and tried to control my excitement a bit. But as usual, it was useless. Panting like a chain smoker climbing stairs, I fell in line for the first climb. I was actually feeling decent, got the breathing controlled and a good 'all day climbing' pace. I had many pass me and I had particular guy that surprised me. Yep. I was climbing, thinking of the rock section and the loose, messed up parts at one of the corners and I heard a grunt and curse from behind me.

"You want by?" I asked as there was plenty of room to move over.

"Nope. I've ridden behind you before. I'll stall and get off and you'll just pedal right by. So, I'm going sit right her and learn. You make it all look easy."

That kinda surprised me. I mean I've been up here for near about every endurance race this company held at HC and I reckon this here feller had too. Anyway we went right up that hill. The 'G out' was next and I was looking forward to it as its great fun.

So this year I brought up my '08 Yeti 575. It's a good bike. Well, a very good bike to tell the truth. I named it Mrs. White after a character in my adventure novel 'Hell In A Handbasket.' Anyway me and Mrs. White were hooking it up going to the 'G out' and I knew there'd be photographers taking snap shots and I wasn't too far off. As I came out of the 'G out' I got some decent air 'cept there was a photographer right where I was gonna land!

"Gawddamnit!" I screamed as I narrowly missed him. I twisted the bars to the right and she landed not inches from the moron. I'd like to have hit him for being a moron, but he didn't know any better I reckon. Anyway I scooted across the meadow and up the second hill right nicely. This year was gonna be better than last year. Yep, I might get 6 laps this year. Pretty confident of me eh?

The 1st DH came and went with no drama. The 3rd climb was pretty comfortable and I was able to stay with a small pack of riders that I'd been with since the start. Yep. Pretty damned good this year. The 4th climb, the rock climb, came and went and the 2nd big DH was tickling my brain as I crested the climb and I fell in behind a guy on a hard tail.

The guy was pretty good at going down too. He and I went down smoother than honey on a hot day. The Yeti is so smooth going DH. I was almost to the big boulders and I saw people and…. more photographers. Unlike the others, these guys were out of the way and hootin' it up and cheering the racers on, probably looking to photo some carnage. The next section is the road and the one more hill climb. Just like before. Every lap I dread this last hill. Well it's not changed. Nope. Still sucks. Then the finish line flashes by and my first lap is gone. 1:16. That's good for me. At our tent I changed socks and got some grub and headed back out.

On the 1st climb the evil hot foot started to come creeping into my race. "Crap!" I spoke aloud. I tried to go quickly but each stroke became a challenge. Then it happened. The realization that it was going to haunt me each stroke. "Wonderful," I moaned to Mrs. White. Hell, I might as well talk to her as there's no one near me.

I finished the climb and waved to the aid station and headed for the 'G out'. No drama this time and the meadow was just a place to try to make up time. The 2nd hill climb went by and I was looking forward to the 1st DH. Well I can have fun there at least. On the long road leading to the Oak Tree two guys ripped by me like I had a broken chain. "I don't think so," I murmured. So I stood up and sprinted after them.

Yeah, this cool. Going very fast. Then I started getting sloppy. Uh, missed that corner's turn in. Brushed a branch. Oops! over-shot that corner, I flew at speeds that weren't close to being safe and soon I was getting over my head. Way over my head. I over shot a corner and never made it back on the line, and then Mrs. White dropped into a rut.

"Oh shhhiiiiit!" I was going down. *Can't save it, shhhiitttttt!* I was on the way to the ground. I could see it all happening. Then I saw the Manzanita tree. There's the red bark and craggy limbs. Hum, there's no leaves on this side, it musta been hit a few times before. Ha ha, poor little tree, just hanging out, too bad the race course is right next to it. This is all the stuff that was racing in my mind in the split seconds before impact. Yes, I hit it. Hit it hard too. After the impact my head was ringing.

Get the bike. Go! Go! Go! Rest later. Don't sit here on the race course! I grabbed Mrs. White and hauled her upright and swung a leg over. Blood splattered on the hydro-formed top tube. *Blood? Musta scrapped something. Look later. Go! Go! Go!* So I did a quick sprint to get back up to race speed. *Lean. Pull up. Squeeze the front brake. Yeah everything is working. The bars are a bit crooked. I can fix that at the tent.*

I looked down on Mrs. White's hydro-foamed top tube and saw blood, lots of blood. *Wow I must be bleeding purty good. Oh well, it'll stop later.*

The 3rd hill climb was upon me and I quickly forgot the blood as the hot foot slammed me. Time to walk. After a few paces I had enough of this walking. *Suck up the pain and ride. Suck it up*. Each stroke hurt like I was walking barefoot across a parking lot in El Centro in July.

"Don't walk." I spoke aloud.

"Excuse me?" a voice behind me came to my ears.

"I was telling myself not to walk."

"Not for me. Walking gives me a chance to recover." He answered

“What are you doing?” I asked as each small stroke began to carry me away from him.

“Solo.” He called out.

“You?” he asked.

“Yeah,” I answered. I wondered, “Uh, 8 or 24?”

“24.” I heard his voice fading away.

“Good luck,” I called back. The 3rd hill was gone now. I had the rock hill climb up head. *Gotta keep going. Can’t walk.* My own little chant bounced around in my head. Then the timing tent was before me. It happened so quickly. Well, not really. 1:29 for the lap.

I pulled into our tent and asked Jennifer, Rich’s girlfriend, “Is it still bleeding?”

“It’s squirting. Do you have any bandages?” she asked. I remembered my Camelbak had some in there. So I quickly tore it apart and retrieved a big one and some tape.

“Here.” I handed her the supplies, “Can you cover it up? I’ll get a fresh jersey on and some dry socks.” The whole front of the Zumwalts white jersey was covered in a thick sticky bloody mess. I pulled but the blood had stuck to me so it was like pulling off a big hunk of duct tape. I finally got it off and sat still for a moment.

“Shit.” *Suck it up. Don’t quit. Suck it up.* I pulled on a fresh jersey and socks as she prepared a bandage.

“Okay. Are you going to the aid station? It’s bleeding a lot.”

“I’ll go after the race.” I crammed chicken in my word hole and guzzled a small 10 ounce Gatorade.

“Can you put some fruit in my feed pouch?” I asked as got an Allen pack to adjust my bars.

“There. You’re done.” Still had to cover the gapping hole in my neck.

“Okay. Hold still.” She stuck it on and stepped back.

“Thanks.” Then it was race time.

Out on the course I’d like to say I rode with a new found strength of food, socks and jersey, but it’d be a lie. I hurt and it was miserable. Walking became the norm on the hills. Careening on the edge of control on the DH was the practice now. Gotta make time where I can was my thinking. The bleeding had stopped for the most part. So I quit thinking about anything but the hills. Laps came and went. The hot foot never left.

Finally the 4th lap was before me and I heard a bell ring.

“You wanna pass?” I asked hoarsely.

“No it’s Rich. You okay?” he asked.

“No. the hot foot is killing me. “ I paused, “Walking hills?” I asked.

“Yeah, I’m close to cramping.” He answered.

Gonna be a long lap. I thought.

Then Rich and I were in the timing tent. It was a blur. The hill climbs, the ‘G out’, the meadow, and the down hills, all of it. Just a blur. Now here I am standing it the timing tent. It’s 6:58.

“How much time do I have?” I looked at the timing person.

“You have 1:30 minutes to do a lap. Your last lap was 2:08. You won’t make and it won’t count,” he said. I guess that’s what the guy said. I could see his mouth working but the words were a jumble of sounds, *Can I make it? Can I push my self harder than ever to make it? I can make it.*

Rich brought me back to the reality. “You probably won’t make it and the lap won’t count. I can’t do another, so you’ll have to do it alone.”

The situation was before me now. Will I DNF? Will I just have 4 laps in?

“Is this a DNF?” I asked the timing guy.

“No, you just finished the race that’s all.”

There. It’s done. Rich and I walked back to the Ford Expedition, Jennifer pushed Rich’s Viscous Cycle hard tail and Rich gently pulled Mrs. White away.

“You have to go to the aid station,” he spoke quietly. “I’ll take the bikes. Jennifer, can you walk with him?” She smiled a nice Dutch smile and we went to the aid station.

I sat down and the attendant looked at the wound. “Uh, I gotta get some help. Bob, can you come here?” he called to someone out of sight. Then Bob show’d up.

“Hmm.” He clicked on a flashlight to see better. “I’ve got to get someone else,” Bob spoke as he flipped the light off.

The first guy spoke, “They’re gone. It’s just us. You’ll have to go to the emergency room for stitches. There’s one in Hemet.”

“Look, it’s not bleeding now. I’ll go to Kaiser in SD.”

Then it was over. The SUV was packed and the drive to SD began.

“Let’s stop and see how Eric and the SEALs are doing in Vail Lake.” I requested.

“Are you okay? Don’t you need stitches?” Rich asked.

“Yeah, but 30 minutes isn’t going make a difference.”

So we stopped and found Eric’s team. They were hammered; the temperature had been a high of 105° and a low of 100°! They were in 3rd place and 6th over-all. Man, that’s core! One of

their racers got sick. So 3 of them held 3rd place the rest of the 24 hours! Man, that's just friggin core.

Our journey was soon over and I was on the way to Kaiser. Check in and wait. Wait here. Wait there. Little kids screaming. Old people moaning. Gun shot wounds. Knots on heads. Broken legs and vomiting. Nothing like the ER on Saturday at midnight. Finally a Doctor stopped in my curtained section.

"You should have gotten here sooner," Dr. Martin says. I was looking at her thinking, *man this is a big girl. At least double D's. Not fat but tall and thick*, she was flipping my chart then she clicked on that bright light and scoped out the cut. She pulled and prodded, and then she asked "Why didn't you get here sooner?"

"Well, I was racing up at Hurkey Creek. It's an 8 hour endurance race and I wanted to finish." I told her.

"Hmm. Well you could have used at least 10 stitches Tim; you bruised your larynx and Adam's apple. You're very fortunate Tim; you missed your jugular by a few millimeters. Very fortunate." She laid the clip board down and stepped back, "You'd not be here if you'd cut it." *Crap, I had no idea it was that close.*

"It's too late to stitch it now, so you'll have to let it drain and take antibiotics," she commented as picked up my chart again, she paused, flipping a page back. She droned on about follow-up visits but I was thinking about bed. The cut would heal on its own and my larynx and apple would heal in time. I didn't tell her I was going scuba diving in 7 days. I figured the less she knew about that the better.

Finally I was done. It was sunrise when I pulled into the driveway at 5:30 am Sunday morning. 24 hours ago I started this adventure and now it was over.

There you go folks. Till next time.

Hoser.