



## IronPrayer at Ironman® Arizona - April 13, 2007

Event report by Stan Smith

We had our 3<sup>rd</sup> annual IronPrayer event for Ironman Arizona on Friday, April 13, 2007 at 4:00 p.m. at the Tempe Mission Palms hotel. The event was a real blessing for all in attendance, especially those who were racing on Sunday. On behalf of IronPrayer and FCA Endurance, we want to thank, in particular, all of those friends - including local members of the International Christian Triathlon Network's Phoenix planning team - who were an integral part of getting this event booked at the hotel and publicized. A key component of this was that members of the Phoenix ICTN team volunteered their services to race directors Paul Huddle and Roch Frey to stuff packets a couple of weeks prior to the race. This allowed each racer to get a copy of the information sheet concerning the IronPrayer event (and information about next January's ICTN-sponsored endurance sports camp/retreat in Scottsdale; more at [www.ictrinet.com](http://www.ictrinet.com)), but also allowed ICTN to secure a spot in the race expo. Being able to participate in the expo was a further blessing in terms of talking up the IronPrayer event to racers. It also allowed for opportunities to hand out copies of the triathlon-specific tract "Where Are You in the Race of Life?" published by ICTN ministry partner Step Up To Life. At the risk of leaving someone off the list (any omissions are my error alone), thanks are due to: Sandy and Phil Plentzas, Linc Murdoch, Dan Cadriel, Don Campbell (who also served on short notice as our audio technician, allowing use of his portable sound system; thanks, Don!), Mike Brown, Marc Strickland, Jay Crabb, Greg Krasa, Arva Bynum, JR Rosania, Dan Ross, Rick Hall, Kevin Weitzel, Rob Harter, Brian Grasky, Charlie Brown, and my homestay buddy, Jason Ford. Thanks are due as well to Troy and Robin Soares of IronPrayer and Chris Anderson of FCA Endurance for their behind-the-scenes support. Tim Pennington: thanks for sending along the IronPrayer banner and thanks again for your service last November at the IronPrayer event for the 2006 edition of Ironman Florida. Also making valuable contributions were: our hosts at the Mission Tempe Palms hotel; Paul Huddle, Roch Frey and the folks at North American Sports, Inc.; all of our speakers; and, local Teammates including Kathi Ridgeway and the folks who worked with her at the FCA Endurance-sponsored run aid station at Tempe Town Lake, just west of Rural Road. (Way to go, Kathi; your crew did a great job representing Christ and FCA-E at this year's race.) Again, if I have forgotten anyone from the on-the-ground or behind-the-scenes teams, I apologize.

One of the first challenges this year was to make sure that we had a good slate of speakers to encourage, motivate and lift up our IronPrayer attendees. In a true Matthew 21:22 moment, when we asked for the Lord's help in lining up some speakers, we had just a great outpouring of offers of help. Jason Lester, Brett Bastian, John Shelp, Mike Pluimer, and Scott Bennefield all expressed a willingness to speak and soon our challenge became how to make enough time for everyone. A further blessing came in the form of Heather Gollnick's race schedule having a last minute change: although she had already raced hard and well in January at Pucon in Chile (2<sup>nd</sup> by less than 30 seconds to Lisa Bentley) and again in March at Ironman New Zealand (2<sup>nd</sup> to Jo Lawn in a personal IM PR of 9:28 with an IM run PR of 3:11), Heather felt like God was leading her to race in Arizona. Although she was a late entry to the pro start list, she generously agreed to share at the event again (Heather has been a mainstay at the IM Arizona IronPrayer events). This led to some shuffling of the roster. Brett, in particular, was gracious enough to give up his slot to let there be time for others to speak.

What follows is a quick summary of the speakers, the main theme of their message, and some notes about how you can get additional information and/or resources from the speakers:

#### Jason Lester:

Jason is an FCA Teammate and professional artist from El Segundo, California. Jason read from Psalm 23 and spoke briefly about how the Lord has guided him and restored his soul after some tough times in his life. Most notably, Jason, who grew up in the Phoenix area, was hit at age 12 by a drunk driver while out riding his bike. Although Jason recovered, he lost the use of his right arm. Jason raced Ironman Arizona this year, turning in an impressive 1:29 swim while stroking with only his left arm. After a solid 6:38 bike split in windy conditions, Jason scorched past a number of runners to bring it home in 4:09 (!) for an overall time of 12:38. For more on Jason's amazing story, check out the following links:

*Arizona Republic article from Thursday, April 11, 2007 -*

<http://www.azcentral.com/sports/azetc/articles/0411ironman0411.html>

*Inspire Pictures website (Jason is in preproduction on a movie detailing his life story) -*

<http://www.inspirepictures.com/>

#### Mike Pluimer:

Mike raced at Ironman Arizona last year, and had a very cool story about the power of corporate prayer. After suffering some pretty serious upper GI distress during last year's race, Mike was considering a DNF. However, at one point on the 3-lap run, he was able to pass by where his wife, Heather, was watching the race and let her know what was going on. Heather immediately dialed up their pastor from their hometown in Minnesota and got their friends and family working to prayer together for Mike to get some relief. Those prayers were answered when, and about mile 14 on the run, Mike started to be able to digest some calories and get back into the game and finish in 12:28. There is a humorous postscript to all of this in that Mike had to jump a plane, the same night as his finish, for a meeting that was beginning the next night across the country in Pinehurst, North Carolina. Mike's story is one that anyone who has had nutritional issues can relate to, and it is a testament to what can be accomplished through group prayer. Again, Matthew 21:22 tells the story: *"If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer."*

Mike is Technical and Engineering Manager for the Plastic Pipes Institute and, when he is not racing, is an incredible fundraiser for charities through the Janus Charity Challenge. At Arizona, he raised over \$158,000 for the Hope Crisis Pregnancy Center! We highlighted for the group that Janus is a great example of an easy way for athletes to use their talents for endurance as a witness to others and also as an encouragement to charities in their communities.

For more on Mike's racing and charity activities, you can check out his blog at:

<http://crosstrainercoaching.com/>

### John Shelp:

John has been involved in triathlon as an athlete and coach for a long time, but this is his first year racing as a pro. John's talk - given while he was still hoarse from a cold that he got just prior to traveling to Tempe - was a good reminder for all present that no matter how fast you are in triathlon (or how good you are in another area of your life), there are always obstacles, challenges and fears to overcome. (John related, as an illustration, how he had just attended his first "pro meeting" at this race and told of being in the same room with some very prominent pros who had their headphones in place and their game faces already on; pretty intimidating stuff.)

What is truly remarkable about John managing a new career as a pro while balancing his obligations as a husband, father, and coach is that he is doing all of this while he recovers from a lymphoma diagnosis.

John's cold improved after Friday and he was able to race in 9:48 on Sunday, good for 17<sup>th</sup> among male pros and a strong 32<sup>nd</sup> overall finish on a day of tough racing conditions in Tempe. As John said later, he was not working on his own energy out on the race course, but on the strength of the Father.

John coaches with SCS Multisport in Minnesota. You can check out their website at:

<http://www.scsmultisport.com/index.html>

### Heather Gollnick:

Heather, as noted above, was a late addition to this year's women's field, but we were obviously glad to have her, her husband Todd, and their kids Jordan, Joshua, and Zachary with us in Tempe.

Space doesn't really permit a complete assessment of why Heather is such a great witness. For sure, her status as a multiple-time Ironman winner (4 times now that she took Sunday's title in Tempe) helps to increase the profile of IronPrayer, pulls additional attendees into IronPrayer events where she is speaking, and helps folks to understand that being a warrior for Christ is not incompatible with being a fierce and determined competitor. But more than that, Heather and Todd are just *real*. They love the Lord, they love their kids, and they are willing, even in the midst of family vacation time and pre-race stress and obligations, to make time to speak with and encourage other triathletes. Having the Gollnick family with us at IronPrayer was a real blessing.

At this year's event, Heather spoke about the need to make time for God in our daily lives in the same way that we make time for the other things that are important to us.

As many of you know, in addition to being a wife, mother, and pro triathlete, Heather also manages to find time to do some coaching. You can find out more about what is going on with her training and race schedule, as well as get more information about her coaching at:

<http://www.heathergollnick.com>.

Also, on the Saturday before the race, Kevin Mackinnon of Ironman.com profiled Heather and her family on the Ironman website. You can check that article out at:

<http://www.ironman.com/columns/ironmanlife/kevin-mackinnon-profiles-the-gollnick-family>.

Several of us were working at the First Wave Tri Club/Tribe Multisport/ICTN run aid station on Sunday and saw how phenomenally deep both Joanna Zeiger and Heather were digging into

their reserves on the last lap of the run. It was just an amazing performance by two very brave women. But as exciting as that was, an even more indelible and enduring image from the race for many of us will always be that shot of Heather's kids swarming her after she crossed the line. (See photo section at the end of this document.)

### Scott Bennefield:

Scott is a multiple-time Ironman finisher and also serves as the Body Life Pastor at Hoffmantown Church in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and was our "closer" for this year's IMAZ IronPrayer event. Space doesn't permit a recap of all of the points that he made, but one of the main themes was the idea that Jesus Christ came to save *all* men. Scott was very generous with his time and did a good job as well of tying together some of the themes presented by Jason, Mike, John, and Heather.

Scott had a tough experience during the race when another competitor clipped his wheel from behind at high speed on the bike, sending Scott down with non-life threatening, but race-ending injuries. He even sustained a broken helmet, which indicates the severity of the incident. He had a long, tough drive home from Tempe to Albuquerque on the Monday after the race. As you might expect, however, Scott has been able to keep things in perspective and will, no doubt, toe the line again at an IM sometime in the near future. Keep Scott in your prayers as he recovers.

You can find out more about Scott's ministry in Albuquerque and get in touch with him through Hoffmantown Church, at:

<http://www.hoffmantown.org>.

### Bob Brubaker:

Pastor Bob Brubaker closed our event with a final prayer. Bob is a pastor from East Orlando, Florida and has been involved for years in outreach within the endurance sports community via his PowerBreak organization.

Pastor Linc Murdoch filed this report via email on Bob's finish at this year's race:

*"Bob Brubaker put in one of the most gutsy performances I've ever seen. Bent over at almost 90 degrees due to back spasms the last number of miles, he soldiered on trying to make it in by midnight. He came by me with 3.5 miles to go. We talked, prayed and I told him, 'You've done 3.5 miles a thousand times - just do it one more time!' I headed for the grandstands to be with his wife Jan. I left the grandstands at 11:45pm since he'd not come in yet, to go out to see how he was doing and found him with about 2/3rds of Mill Ave. Bridge left. He was in severe pain barely able to walk, but determined to get to the line. He had 9 min. to get in and made it in with 5 min. to spare. Bob, very courageous performance my friend!!! I'll never forget it. Two years ago, one breath from death...now...You are a TRUE Ironman, 15 times over!"*

Thanks, Bob, for wrapping us up at IronPrayer, and congratulations on a courageous and inspiring finish. Bob finished in 16:54.38. Two years ago, on April 6, 2005, Bob was literally one breath from death in a bed at University Hospital in Denver, Colorado. His lung collapsed when a chest tube inserted after a lung biopsy was removed. Bob was literally "one breath from death" until a second chest tube was inserted to save his life. Following that experience and Bob's time in ICU (Bob had to recover from complications of his body blowing up to five times its normal size when the air that suddenly escaped from his collapsed lung was trapped within his body), doctors at the National Jewish Medical Center were able to diagnose Bob's chronic respiratory problem. Bob was suffering from a rare disease called Diffuse Pan Bronchialitis. As the diagnosis was made and treatment began, so did God's healing process also get underway. Bob has made remarkable strides in recovery to the point where his doctors in Denver used words like "amazing" and "remarkable"; God is truly at work in Bob's life and in his teaching.

To find out more about Bob and his ministry, check out these links:

<http://www.powerbreak.org/breath.html>

<http://powerbreak.org/powerbreakministries.html>

**Brett Bastian:**

Finally, it would be a mistake to fail to mention Brett Bastian. Brett came down from Brandon, South Dakota to race and was originally going to be part of our speaker rotation, but was flexible enough to give up his slot so we could make more time for Heather and Scott to speak. Brett was racing on Sunday in the FCA Endurance kit and was a real inspiration to the volunteers at the First Wave/Tribe/ICTN and FCA Endurance run aid stations. He raced and finished strong in 12:04.

Brett is a triathlete and coach, and is the founder of Dakota T2 Multisport Coaching, LLC. In the last year has launched a ministry called Endurance for Christ. He has also recently published a book called Empower Yourself to a Healthier New You, which focuses on health from spiritual and physical perspectives.

You can get in touch with Brett and find out more about his book by going to these links:

<http://www.dakotat2coaching.com/>

<http://search.barnesandnoble.com/booksearch/isbninquiry.asp?r=1&ean=9781600348815>

Thanks again to all who helped to make this year's IronPrayer in Tempe a real success. Looking forward to seeing you in Arizona next year!

**Photos:**



*From left to right: Pastor Linc Murdoch, Stan Smith, and Jason Lester at ICTN's expo booth.  
Photo credit: Jason Lester*



Jason Lester finishes 2007 Ironman Arizona, Sunday, April 15, 2007

Photo credit: asipphoto.com



Heather Gollnick greeted at the finish by (l-to-r) Todd, Jordan, Zachary, and Joshua.

Photo credit: asipphoto.com