

# USA Transplant Games Metal Results

Louise Lerminiaux, Wellness Consulting LRL

And the results are in:

5km road race – bronze medal with 27:42 – woohoo!!

500m swim – 5<sup>th</sup> place – truth is there were only 5 competitors

20km bike – DNF but walked away with titanium – huh?

1500m race – DNS

Sat morning after a great 5km race and hearing I won bronze on route to the pool, I was pumped. The swim was going to be hard and I knew it. I struggled a lot but finished and was still ahead up to 6 mins going into the bike portion.

I knew Sat I had a great chance at a medal in the triathlon event since it is collective time for all 3 events and my run had gained me a lot of time. I was positioned behind the rider in front of me who won the tri event 2 years ago. We crossed the start timing mats then I realized she was not clipped into her pedals. I was on the inside and was trying to maneuver around her. I ended up bumping her back tire, and was going to hit her gears so I was trying to unclip while I turned to the right and ended up hitting a concrete road barrier. My right hand broke my fall, resulting in fracturing my wrist in 2 places, the bone punctured my skin. I initially got up thinking I could ride until I saw the blood and deformity in my hand. I was so pissed I couldn't ride which probably prevented me from going into shock.

I was rushed to ER and had surgery though a bigger concern was ensuring the wound was cleaned as fast as possible to prevent infection due to my suppressed immune system. The UW staff in both orthopedics and transplant wards were amazing. I have a permanent T plate and 7 screws in my R wrist. From the photo a teammate had at the fall, my hand saved my face and head from hitting the concrete so I feel very fortunate. I have a splint for the next month and then will start rehab. My break was clean enough that I should gain full mobility. It is amazing what one figures out how to do with teeth and feet when a dominant hand is unavailable like opening all my med bottles, putting on clothes, flossing teeth. I can't hold on enough yet to drive but hope to by next week, and typing is slow since it is all left handed. The greatest thing of course is Conna was with me to deal with the hospital and traveled home with me.

Despite this setback, the event was amazing. There were over 7000 recipients and living donors and it was so validating to be around people who knew what you have been through and continue to go through to live each day. I would show up for practices and events, and everyone would just say what type of transplant they had kidney, liver, heart, etc. nonchalantly and then we would talk about our training. At the swim events, you could tell from the men's scars what type of transplant they had.

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There were many memorable moments but a few stand out:

- National anthem played on the bagpipes by a woman who received a double-lung transplant a few years prior and wanted to pay tribute to learning an instrument that showed her gratefulness for each breathe
- A man who was going to be receiving his 4<sup>th</sup> kidney transplant – the prior 3 were from his brothers and the next one was going to be from his son
- Larry Hagman from Dallas and I Dream of Jennie fame has a liver transplant and has started a tradition of 'show your scar' which we all did at once during the opening ceremonies
- A mother who lost her son at 2.5 months and donated his heart to a 2 week old baby 3 years ago. The families met for the first time Sat morning and the donor mother sang a tribute song
- Walking into the opening ceremonies with the donor family we sponsored who told me her son has touched over 100 lives due to donating all his organs, tissue, bones, and skin
- The woman whose bike I hit came to the hospital on Mon and offered her bronze bike medal to me from the 20km race. I declined saying she earned it and I would see her in 2 years!
- Conna finishing the 5km race in 37 mins putting her in the top 10 living donor female finishers – this is huge!
- Finishing my 500m swim to the encouragement and cheers of the entire pool since I was 6 mins behind the last finisher, then getting out in complete tears because I had actually finished and being hugged by Conna

The stories of courage, sacrifice, adversity, determination and hope exceeded my expectations and renewed my role in continued education and awareness of both living and deceased organ donation.

Thanks to all for the support – I will be back, this fracture is minor compared to what I have already overcome with my transplant and will just make me come back stronger and more determined. The USA Games are every 2 years and rumour has they may be in California; World Games are in the alternating years so next summer is Sweden so that is now on 'the list'.