

# Tri, tri again!



They were lined up on the Perryville Community Park dock at 7:30 a.m. on Saturday, July 11th. There were a little more than 50 of them — men wearing skin tight black suits and neon green swim caps. A man on a bullhorn was counting down from 30 seconds. Their heart rates began the mountainous climb required by the cardiovascular feat before them. All they needed was for that man to yell “Go!” At that moment, they would rush the waters of the Susquehanna in one of the ultimate tests of physical and mental strength: a triathlon.

“That’s my Daddy!” Collin said to the lady with the fancy camera to our right.

“Good luck, Daddy!” Collin shouted. Patrick turned and waved, his eyes obscured by his smoky goggles. His dark, shaggy hair peeked out of his neon green cap.

Soon, the buzzer sounded, and Collin watched as his dad (and a whole lot of other people’s dads) glided through the murky, tepid river for a half mile loop (sprint distance).

“He’s coming, Collin! We better hurry!” I said, taking him by the hand to the top of the dock where the swimmers were emerging and dashing off to the second leg of their journey, a 7.8 mile bike ride.

Collin scanned the faces of each athlete, looking for his Daddy’s beard. When he saw Patrick speedily ascending the stairs, Collin shouted, “Yay, Daddy!”

We watched him transition to bike mode, cheering him along as he took off for a tour of Perryville, MD at 20 - 40 miles per hour in the open air. This is the hard part. They’re out of sight for so long.

“I think that’s his orange shirt,” I’d say. False alarm. More waiting.

Collin was getting restless, so I broke out the Play-Doh and picture books I brought to keep him busy. When Patrick finally came whirring in, dismounted his bike, and ran it to the transition area, Collin and I dashed over to him, leaning on the fence that separated the athletes from the supporting cast.

“How are you feeling?” I asked.

“Rough!” he said, as he strapped on his running shoes for a 2.4 mile run.

Collin and I waited at the finish line, watching for that beard and orange shirt. Finally, we saw Patrick bolting toward the inflatable finish line where we were shouting, “Come on! You can do it!” and “Dad-dy! Dad-dy!” Before we knew it, we were sharing a sweaty group hug.

“Daddy! You did it!” Collin shouted, gazing at Patrick’s finisher medal.

A triathlon is by no means a spectator sport. But, I brought Collin along with me to the Diamond in the Rough sprint so that he could see the (tri)athlete in his father. I

wanted him to be inspired to take care of his physical fitness, to attempt and overcome life's challenges, and to always make it to the finish line.

