

AT Member of the Month: Mike Cruzcosa

By Tonyia Cone

On Racing a Shopping Cart and Other Tri-ing Adventures

Austin Triathletes: How did you become interested in triathlons? What was your athletic background before triathlons?

Cruzcosa: I have been a runner since high school. I grew up in a small town in Southwest Texas and I used to run out on country roads for fun because it was better than watching TV. I started running 10Ks in the 80's and marathons in the early 90's. My favorite marathon was Big Sur.

I ran a bunch of marathons but eventually I got bored. I remember after the Motorola in 2002 I got on the bus to go back to my truck. Everybody was all happy and talking and stuff. I was just sitting there thinking, "Yeah well, that happened. I guess I'll go eat or something." Right after that I started running a lot less and rock climbing a lot more. Then my friend Jan told me I should check out triathlon. I watched her at a local race and thought, "Hey I could do that." Up until then it seemed like biking and swimming was a waste of good running minutes but I was ready for a change.

Jan helped me train for my first race, the Dog Ridge Sprint Tri in Harker Heights, Texas, in June 2002. I remember we were swimming laps at Northwest Pool, and I asked her to show me what it was like in an open water swim with a bunch of people around me. She said okay and told me to start swimming. Then she swam beside me and bumped me and splashed water in my face and swam over me and grabbed my ankle and elbowed me in the head a few times. She said, "That's pretty much what it's like." After that it didn't seem so bad when it happened in a race.

I wanted to do my first tri on my old mountain bike before I spent money on a new bike. But I wanted to be really fast on it. So I took it to Austin Tri-Cyclist to get aerobars for it. That's the first time I met Don. He laughed at me and said it would be like putting aerobars on a shopping cart, but then he spent a lot of time with me answering my newbie questions and showing me stuff around the store. He told me if I wanted a real bike I could come back and he'd credit me the cost of the aerobars. Later that summer I did my first tri and I was hooked. Funny, but when I started doing triathlon I discovered that running wasn't so boring. You might say I rediscovered running through triathlon. And the week after my first tri I gave Don back his aerobars and got a Quintana Roo.

AT: Which events have you participated in? What was your proudest moment?

Cruzcosa: I do the local circuit - Texas State, Cactus, Captex, Mable Falls, Couples, Boerne, Burnet, Sea World, Dilloman, as well as the Ironhead and Prairieman in Grand Prairie, Iron Star in Conroe, Buffalo Springs. My proudest moment to date was doing the Great Floridian Ironman in Clermont, FL.

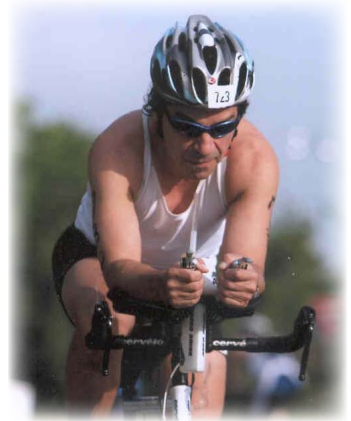
AT: What was the biggest challenge you've faced while training or racing? How did you overcome it?

Cruzcosa: My biggest challenge to date was recovering from a bad ankle injury last year. I rested it a couple of days but then I got bored with resting so I started training again. Then when triathlon season started, I tried racing on it. I would rest it, race on it and it would get injured again. Then I would rest it and race on it again. I missed a lot of races last year. You read in magazines about allowing time for injuries to recover but when it happens to you it is hard to do the right thing. It is a lot better this season. If I had it to do over again I would remember what I was doing immediately before injuring my ankle and I would do something different.

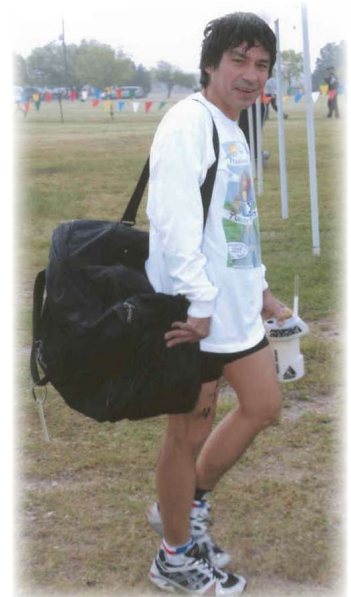
AT: What event are you planning to participate in next? When and where is it?

Cruzcosa: I am looking forward to doing some halves - CATS up in Arkansas, PrairieMan and Iron Star. I am also looking for events that are sort of off the main circuit that I have not done before, like Blanco and Rio De Vino.

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(Photo courtesy of Mke Cruzcosa.)



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AT: What's your training schedule like? How often, what do you do, where do you do it? Do you work out in a group or by yourself? What's your favorite place/way to train? Where is your training now?

Cruzcosa: I usually train six days per week. I do not have a set schedule because I do not always know in advance how much free time I will have each day or when I will have it. I work a lot of hours and travel for business. Plus I co-parent my seven year old son Dylan, who lives with his mom, and my dog needs lots of exercise or she will tear up the house. So each day I know I will do something for one to two hours, but I sort of have to steal those hours when I can.



(Photo courtesy of Mke Cruzcosa.)

Some days I do one thing and some days I do bricks and some days I do all three. I live near Shoal Creek about two and a half miles from Northwest Pool, so my favorite workout is to run from my house to the pool, swim and run back, then ride my bike for an hour. It's like a triathlon right outside my house. On occasion I think of making up a t-shirt that says "Shoal Creek Triathlon." I would for sure win my age group because it would be just me.

I pretty much train alone since my schedule is so erratic. But there are usually other people at the pool or on bikes or running so I pair up with people or groups when I find them and go with them for a while. I like it when I am out and I see other people working out and it is apparent that they're triathletes and we nod at each other and move on. Triathlon can often be a solitary lifestyle but it is one that is shared with a lot of people so it is an interesting community.

AT: What is your ultimate tri goal? What do you hope to achieve along the way to achieving this goal?

Cruzcosa: When people pass me in races I check out the age written on the back of their calf. Sometimes I get passed by people 20 years older than me and they look really strong. Sometimes I pass people 20 years younger than me and I feel okay about it. Usually I come in about the middle of my age group. I am a mid-pack guy. I compare my race times to my previous times and I feel good if I improve a little and learn a little each race.

I look forward to many more years of triathlon and a few more Ironmans along the way. My ultimate goal is to maintain a fitness lifestyle, in whatever form that takes. One thing leads to the next. It all works out if you follow your passions and continue growing.

AT: What's your favorite race and why?

Cruzcosa: It is weird, but I really like Couples. Just the whole concept is neat. To me it's like the prom of local triathlon. So far I have gone alone and hung back with the Unaffiliated Others. They make us wait until the last wave, but I think it is neat. I like to watch people at Couples, but each tri has a special appeal. I really like the course layout at Burnet. I do not do many sprints anymore but I always do Burnet because I really like the course. Woolman in San Angelo is a lot the same way. It is a really cool course.

AT: What was your high point of the year?

Cruzcosa: I do not think it has happened yet; ask me again in November. As described above, I injured my ankle last year and missed a lot of races. During off-season training I was apprehensive about how this season would be. I went as hard as I could at CapTex as a way of testing my limits and everything went well. That was a big relief. I got the feeling that I would be able to do a lot of events this season and I was really happy about that.

Texas Iron



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