**Escape from Alcatraz – The Ginn Perspective.**

Well if finally happened after a long wait and an even bigger weight gain! the 3 amigos went west to San Francisco helped along by our trusty better halves,

Lynn and i arrived in sunny San Fran a week before the race and starting to get out bearing on race and all things SHARK!!! yes, they were evident in everything i saw and heard, so after a few days we set off to have some MR & MRS time in Yosemite and Napa Valley.

The rest of the amigos arrived, and we all decide to meet up to test out the water in the bay, Dave and I planned on the skins route whilst Mark was ready for a wetsuit taster but succumbed to the will of the boys talk. Well, it was a tad cold well blood freezing to be fair but once we got moving the water was ok (ish). it was only short test but was a must for this race.

Registration day arrives and as with all things Americans organise it was a flowing walk through to collect our numbers, timing chips, and booty. Luckily, the organisation here was a bit lacking and so we found ourselves with double or triple the freebies we were meant to have but hay ho this race aint cheap so every little helps. After completing the formalities, we were treated to the briefing by the organisers and some cheering and clapping of former many time entrants and us, the newbies.

Race day arrives, or should we say race middle of the night! as Dave and I had 40min walk from the hotel to the transition location. We met in the lobby at 3:30am to get our gear ready and waited for Mark to arrive from his leisurely 10min stroll to greet us, (jammy git)!

We were all aboard the bus to the departure location of the HORNBLOWER paddle steamer whilst we waited for Lynn and Alison to see us off (Jane was to see us at the swim finish exit) we had the little jokes about getting in the cold water, shark attacks and the fact that even though all of us had become seasoned swimmers the nerves were there.

We decided to sit on the top in the rain with our wetsuits mid waist to get used to the cold. After a late start due to the rain, the Pros were off then the Challenged athletes and then the rest of the lemmings were jumping off the side of the boat, we joined the throng and after a little diversion to the other end of the boat, we fist pumped and wished each other luck and we were off!!

The swim was a very busy 30 or so minutes of people swimming into me and until if finally reached the shoreline exit all limbs intact and not shark to be seen, I exited the water and there right in front of me was Mark. I tried to catch him and tap him but heard the tomes of Jane, Lynn and Alison so had a wave in the direction the cheers came from.

The warmup run bags where laid out in number order so I ran to mine and swiftly changed from wetsuit to tri suit look and trainers, as I left the area I noted mark still there and a little glee was felt inside if I’m honest, then the1/2 mile run to T1 for bike gear and bike exit,  I was still  in front of Mark but I knew this wouldn’t last as soon as the Missile got unto speed he’d be on my tail then I’d be left for dust. this happened about 3miles into the bike, he past me and i shouted go on mark (but feeling you bugger)!! at this point mark slowed down and with a shock to his voice said “how did you get in front of me ?” and with this he pushed on and yes left me for dust. It was wet and the roads although steep-in places were pretty easy going and flowed well before returning T2,

Once on the run I started to think this is ok if I keep under 9min miles I’ll do ok on this run.  Well that was short lived as 2 miles in the climbing starts, wooden steps 850ft upwards, followed by more up and then some more and more and just a bit more before a drop down to the beach through the woods and then it hit me the dreaded SAND I hate sand and I hate sand in my trainers. I saw Dave on is way up the beach and gave him a shout and wave and the obligatory thought of, oh bugger he will catch me soon and so on with the job of keeping him at bay. A passing thought was it’s not too much of it just a run up and back along the beach, but the final kick in the teeth to sap your energy was the SAND STEPS 400 OF THEM. Well I got a rhythm going and it was soon over, yes the worst bit done, well actually not the final 200m after the steps was a sludgy slippery mess and was uphill and hard to stay upright. Now downhill came and then the final 2 miles of flat back to the finish and still no Dave in sight. That was short lived as a chirpy voice said “can I join you?” it was Dave, of course it was, and a very gracious Dave he was I said go and get you race done but no he said we’ve waited two long years and travelled 6 thousand miles to get here so we may as well finish together. What a Gent. So, we did, along with the UNION JACK and Dave shouting GOD SAVE THE QUEEN.

Mark was in his usual place waiting for us to finish and gave us a pat on the back and pointed to the food tent which was needed now.

So, ESCAPE FROM ALCATRAZ, was it worth it? Well as a bucket list race for Triathletes I think so. But it aint cheap and it’s a long way to go for a Standard distance race, but you only live once and IF THE SHARKS GET YOU THEN YOU DIE ONCE TOO.