

L.A. MARATHON

It was 37 degrees at 6 am.

Plus it was sloppy wet. Not what you would call the best of conditions for 12,000 cyclists or 23,000 marathoners to traverse the streets of L.A. But when you are 40-year-old Dan Powell and you are attempting the LA Duathlon — both the L.A. Marathon Bike Tour and the L.A. Marathon... a frosty, soggy bike seat is where the day begins.

The logistics are what makes this doubleheader so darn much fun.

Step One: Stay at a friend's house Saturday night, March 4. Get up at 4 am. Drive into downtown L.A. Make use of my Frog's Club One reciprocal membership, park in the L.A. Athletic Club lot and set up camp. Total cost for the day? \$10!

Then ride the two miles or so from the L.A. Athletic Club to the Los Angeles Coliseum for the start of the 26.2-mile round trip bike ride, this year designated *Tour de Downpour*.

Note to self: Next year book a room at the L.A. Athletic Club. Friends are nice.... but not *that* nice. Convenience is better. A great hotel, super location and the best fitness facilities in the city. Full weight room, indoor cycling classes, a pool with enough pull buoys and kickboards to keep an age group swim class happy forever and an indoor running track. Did I mention the basketball court with fiberglass backboards?

Powell was wearing a sleeveless bike jersey, a windbreaker, one bike glove with fingers... and one without.

"One hand was numb and I could have used a turtleneck," Powell admits. "It was chilly out there."

Note to self: Never trust a weatherman.

"They said there was a 100% chance of rain," says Powell. "But they said it wouldn't start until about noon."

By noon, the entire city was taking on more water than the *Titanic*.

"Everyone out there just decided to make the best of it, to make lemonade," continues Powell.

The veteran of three marathons and over 40 triathlons is in the training mode for the Isuzu Ironman California. A bike ride followed by a run is called a brick workout. The L.A. Marathon and bike tour is the ultimate brick.

"I met a guy named Ryan and we rode 20 of the 26 miles together," he remem-



Equipped with umbrella, bike, helmet and running shoes, Dan Powell was more than ready for the 15th L.A. Marathon. Photo by Lois Schwartz

Du-ing L.A.

bers. "It would be like 'this is nuts... where are you from?' I ran about 12 miles with someone I met along the way. It was funny. People started complaining about how bad the rain was during the marathon until you said, 'You think this is bad... you should have seen it during the bike ride!' They'd look over and go, 'You did the bike ride, too?' Then they'd get quiet."

Ninety minutes after the 6 a.m. start,

Powell wheeled past the finish and cruised the two miles back to the L.A. Athletic Club. Transition City. He took off every ounce — and there were now a lot of ounces — of his wet clothes.

"I rang out everything I was wearing," he says. "Both socks, gloves... it was all totally soaked through." Next, he took a hot shower and sat in the jacuzzi.

"I finished the bike ride at 7:45, so I had

a full hour to get ready for the marathon. Plus, I was only a few blocks from the start."

Note to self. DEFINITELY get a room next year. I could have been loading up at the mini bar between the bike and the run!

He left the hotel in a singlet and shorts. He then made a quick U turn and grabbed a plastic bag that he cut head and arm holes in.

"That thing saved my bacon," says Powell. "I would have frozen otherwise. I didn't take it off until mile 25."

At mile 8 of the run, the sky opened up.

"It was the hardest rain I've ever seen in my life," said Powell. "I'm yelling, 'Come on, God, is that all you've got?' Everyone was laughing and just dealing with it. What else can you do?"

The little babbling brook that runs through the Wilshire Country Club now looked like Class 5 rapids. Rivers formed across every intersection along Hollywood Boulevard.

"Just when you started warming up, you'd hit this cold river that you'd have to run through," he continues. "You stayed chilled all day long."

The first time Powell ran L.A. was in 1987, the second year of the event. He doesn't remember a whole lot about that particular day. This one he will never, ever forget.

"There was no time when it was misty," he admits, "no time when the rain tapered off at all."

He never considered not racing, even with the tough conditions.

"I know a lot of people probably stayed home," he says. "But I knew I was doing it. I came here to do it."

And he did. After the 90 minute, 26.2-mile bike ride, he ran a 4:02 marathon.

"It took me about seven minutes to get across the starting line, but that was okay," he admits. "I didn't come here to race, I came here for a great training day."

Did he ever. A short walk back to the L.A. Athletic Club and then, you guessed it... a swim.

"I swam for about 30 minutes," he says. "That really loosened up my legs. The next day, I felt better than I've ever felt after a marathon."

Better? Forget du-ing LA. The guy just won the first ever L.A. Marathon/Triathlon.

What could be better than that?▲

BY BOB BABBITT