

# “Buckeye and Steel” By John Martin



We here in Vermont have the Green Mountains. Ohio has the Buckeye flower and think Steel for Pennsylvania. Working on that theme Dot and I finally hit the highway for a state theme triathlon adventure.

First stop was Springfield Ohio located east of Columbus and the Buck Creek State Park that served as host to the appropriately named Great Buckeye Triathlon. We both did the Olympic distance race which consisted of a 1500-meter swim, 28-mile bike and 10k run. The venue at Buck Creek was ideal. The swim was in a large reservoir parallel to a sandy beach. The bike portion of the race was a double loop on country roads past soybean corn fields and horse farms. Our run was also a double out and back on a rolling bike path under and adjacent to the reservoir dam. This course was rated in my top 10. Dot easily bested her age group competition taking away the gold. I crushed my competition as well getting gold bling as well. Ok, I'm coming clean. I was the oldest person in the race and only male over 70. Dot also was the only one in her age group as the other registrant never showed.

Our lodging was a full-service state park cabin about 3 miles from the race venue, with a kitchen, living room and screened in porch. Netflix and internet and cable to boot. The cabin was a short walk to view the reservoir. Biking and running were right from our doorstep.

Aside from the race we did some sightseeing which included a warmup ride of 30 miles on little Miami Valley rail trail a few days prior to our race and then after our race toured the Ohio

Caverns and The Wilds. The caverns were a guided trip through miles of limestone caverns. The Wilds (a conservation center partnering with the Columbus Zoo) took us on a tour of a huge savannah like area that is home to some of the world's most endangered species. The area had been strip mined for coal since the 1940's for several decades before being reclaimed in the 70's with topsoil, contouring and erosion control planting. The area spanned over 10,000 acres (about half the area of Cleveland, Ohio) and included many animals we had never even heard of before.

Our return trip east toward tri-stop number # 2 took us through Wheeling, W.V. We googled a stop there to go for a little run through Oglebay Park. Think Hubbard Park on steroids. Golf course swimming pool, tennis, pickleball bike paths, ponds with fishing and lodging. We did a run in this unbelievably hilly park (over 1000 ft of elevation gain in 6 miles). Our reward was passing many resident deer who blissfully grazed at the edges of the bike path.

Now things were getting serious and we put on our game faces for a showdown with the Steelman triathlon. The venue was at Lake Nockamixon State Park in Quakertown, Pa south of Allentown. We checked into our Air B and B, a straw bale construction house which was six miles from the race site and located on a beautiful rural property that had orchards and a large blueberry patch with many different varieties that our hosts let us pick.

On Sunday August 4th, we did the Steelman Sprint distance triathlon that consisted of a 750-meter swim, 14-mile bike and (very long) 5k run. This race was the Pennsylvania State Triathlon championship race as well and included many teams' adults and youth from around the region.

The race management, Steelman Racing was superior. Every detail was perfect. The course was great, the swim buoys were numerous and numbered, The Highway for the bike course was closed to vehicular traffic and the run was out and back on a bike path. Dot and I are both Pennsylvania age group champions, and yes, I had 4 others in my age group and Dot had 13. Another great trip for this team of two and we're already thinking of road trip 2025!

