



Twas the night before Christmas, no , that ain't right, lets start again.

Twas the night before my first triathlon, preparation had gone pretty well apart from a slight hamstring pull two weeks before ( I may have mentioned this a couple of times lately, sorry) but with a trip to see Darren and much foam rolling I finally got to the position where I was happy that I could give the race a decent go. Having Picked up my number in the afternoon with Paul Knight & his missus Joanna and her friend Katy I loaded all the paraphanaelia needed for the race and my bike into the car.

I had a couple of pints in the evening then set my alarm for 5:30. The good news was I went to sleep pretty quickly, its just a shame that I woke at 2, 4, 5 then 5:15, so much for a good nights kip.

After a decent brekky of my usual prerace porridge and granola I jumped into the car and headed over to ashington. I got there a little early at 6:12 but didn't have to wait too long for Steven French to join me, he got a little lost, but thankfully he was only a few minutes late and not his usual 10 mins 😊.

We then took an easy ride to the start which was only 1km away. I got myself straight into transition and loaded my bike onto the bar and sorted out my kit ready for the transitions from swim to Bike then bike to run. Steven had to nip in and get his number first as he was having far too much of a good time in the lakes the day before.

We then sorted out lockers for ourselves, as we wouldn't be allowed back into transition at the end until all the bikers had returned.

Now it was just a wait to start the swim, which I was really looking forward to, not. We (Anita, Lesley , Steven and Paul) watched the first wave which included Lynn who was gliding through the water very nicely.

I still wasn't happy with my front crawl but I was going to give it a go for as long as I could then switch to Breast stroke.

Thankfully I didn't have too wait long, as my predicted swim time was a rather slow 11 mins I went off in the second wave @ 7:50 . Steven wasn't due off till after 9 and Paul wasn't due to Start till after 10, the speedy bugger !.

So I dumped the last of my kit into the locker and headed into the pool area to get started. Each wave had a final briefing by the very helpful and knowledgeable Iain Fenwick, who along with Shaun has helped me go from complete swimming numpty to being able to be standing fairly confidently on the pool side, thank you gents. Then it was time to get in the pool. I was first off in my lane with 3 others behind me, no pressure then.

So with a final count down I was off ! trying to relax and take it easy, the first 50m was fine but by the second 50 I was already starting to struggle a little with my front crawl, so much so the guy behind me had caught me up at 75m, so I let him go past. I then switched to Breast stroke and then caught the guy up in front ! I just followed him up and down for the next 200m but I was having to slow down a bit, so for the last 100m I gave his ankle a couple of taps and he let me past and I pulled a slight lead on him in the last 100m. It was such a relief to see the buoy to signal the last 50m and I put in a final effort and got the hell out of the water, thank god that was over !!! I quickly hit the lap button on my watch and was pleasantly surprised to see a time of 9:37, almost 90 seconds quicker than previously swam, well chuffed.

So after jumping out of the pool it was a quick run outside, down the side of the pool to transition. A quick towel down, shoved my tshirt on, got my socks and shoes on, then my helmet and sunglasses, only my gloves to go before I could lift my bike down and get going ! unfortunately my gloves were being little awkward bar stewards, took me at least 30 seconds to get them on, muppet. So, I eventually had everything sorted and it was time to get a wiggle on and get on the bike.

The one good thing about having a pants swim time was the fact that at 8 am in the morning on a Sunday there was very little traffic, unlike later on where it was really rather busy.

So, the bike ride. A Quick left out of the sports centre , over the roundabout near Asda then up and over the bridge, already I had someone in my sights and chased them down before leaving the outskirts of Ashington. It was then a quick straight run to the roundabout at pegswood where I turned left down towards bothal, I caught another couple of people on the runup to the downhill section, was going well at this point. Thankfully I knew what was coming on the other side of the bridge out of Bothal the well know "Bothal bank" a tasty little hill , time to drop a cog or six and get up out of the seat.

Just on the hairpin was Anita's Dad with a camera, I am sure I will not look my best at this point. But thankfully bothal bank is mercifully short and before I knew it I had crested the hill, took time to get my breath back then it was back up into my big chain wheel and off we went again, picking up speed towards ashington.

A couple of left turns and I was heading back to pegswood for the second time, but this time turning right on the roundabout. Another little climb up and over the bridge was next, a quick drink on the other side then right again down towards Longhirst. I managed to pick off another cyclist and put the hammer down into longhirst. Slowing slightly to turn right because of traffic then right again, it was then time to head towards longhirst colliery. I enjoyed this section to the train crossing, apart from the potholes that is. A quick safety stop at the crossing then off I went again, heading towards the next right turn at the roundabout to head back towards Ashington, managing to get a quick gel down my neck in the process.

The run into ashington had a few slight inclines but thankfully nothing too drastic and I managed to keep up a pretty decent pace. Before long I hit the main ashington road and turned left for the last mile back to the transition area. I approached transition and managed to get off the bike without falling off, not the quickest dismount I must admit but something to improve on. A quick run to my bike marker, located my bike on the bar, helmet off, cap on, change of shoes, swung the number belt around and I was off again, much better than the last transition, which was far too slow.

So, run time !!! A quick circuit of the car park then right for a bit then over the road marshaled by two familiar faces, a welcome sight, the legend that is Dave Kitching and our obstacle course specialist Michelle Castro, lovely to see their smiling faces.

Thankfully my legs felt ok, running past maccy d's towards the woods, a nice shout out by Tri Northumberlands all round nice guy Brian singleton and I was off on the first lap,

It was a very pleasant run through the woods, only starting to struggle a little towards the end of the first lap, time to dig in and get it finished, its only 5k FFS. So without further ado I cracked on and dragged my arse around the little lap then back up towards the finish, seeing Lynn on the final stretch into the finish and across the line stopping my watch in a time of 1:21:53, not too shabby for my first time, well pleased !

Now it was time to tri ( har har har, groan) to see some of my blyth buddies !

I managed to see Lesley come in on her bike and the Paul finally got his day underway and came steaming out of the pool and onto his rather impressive bike, and off he went like a missile !

I was now on the look out for Steven coming in on his bike then spotted Anita and Ross, was having a canny chat with them when Steven ran past ! nearly missed him, I then grabbed a quick cup of coffee and went back to the woods area to cheer on Steven, I caught him just as he started the little lap then waited for him to finish, which he did with his usual 110% effort.

Steven also did a fantastic time, 1:18:21 , a top 50 finish ! and a sub 20min 5k (ish) to boot !! top bloke !

Steven and I then wandered back to the start and cheered in some fellow competitor's then managed to get our bikes out of transition and head back to the cars for the journey home.

So, in summary, I had a bloody good morning out, great weather conditions certainly helped along with some great support and fantastic marshals', a very well organized event, I thoroughly enjoyed it, even the swim wasn't too bad ! I had held off buying a tri suit until I did this one to test the water, I will be ordering one very soon, as I fancy another one already ! I believe there is one in Ponteland soon !

Thanks for reading

Steve D