

Ironman UK – Bolton - 1st August 2010

The Journey –

Friday 30th July 2010 – 3Pm - We set off on the 210 mile trip to Bolton, this should have taken between 3 & 4 hours – Through slow moving traffic, stand still traffic on the M6 and torrential rain we finally arrived in Bolton at about 9pm – Not a great start to the weekend but at least we, Tasha and I, were there. A trip to Tesco's for some pasta and snacks, then a couple of beers ready for a few hours sleep.

Saturday 31st July 2010 – Bike and bag racking and course recvy.

Up early Saturday, 5 am and walked the half mile down to Tesco for a few bits that I needed and a walk around to the Reebok Stadium – also to give Tasha an extra hour or so sleep.

We drove the “dog leg” section of the bike route from the stadium to the start, about 9 miles, and found T1 in good time for a quick look around before my 10 am slot for registering – walked the short distance to registration and the Expo. Registration was quick and efficient, collected the race bags, numbers, stickers, chip etc and the freebie IM rucksack. Walked back to the car set about swapping my presorted bags into the new bags for racking – set up my bike and racked bike and blue bag. Job done and all was going well.

Had seen most of the Andover Ironmen crew by this point and met up with Jase, Paul V and Nick B in the afternoon for a recvy of the bike course – what an amusing few hours that was, we didn't do the full course, in fact I think we were in the wrong County for most part, taking many wrong turns but having a great laugh. We eventually decided to call it a day and went to the Race briefing, meeting up with Paul W, Paul N & Mark W. After the race briefing we went for a meal, I had the usual pint ;) whilst everyone else was been healthy.

By the time we arrived back at the hotel it was gone 9pm – enough time for a shower and another beer, medicinal purposes, and sleep at around 10.30.

Race Day – 1st August 2010

My alarm sounded at 3-16 am – I was awake, just, but all set for journey that lay ahead. I left the hotel about 3-50 am and walked the half mile or so down to the Reebok stadium where my shuttle bus was waiting at 4-15. On to the bus and arrived at Park Inn Hotel close to T1 at about 4-45am. Walked the short distance to where the bikes were racked – got numbered up and then went to check tyres and sorted out my bottles – was in awe of what was going on around, slightly bemused by it all, over 1000 nutters buzzing around an enclosure full of bikes in a field at that time in the morning.

Time quickly passed by and I decided to put on my wetsuit, it was now about 5.20 am and the announcer was urging athletes to get back into T1 for the walk down to the lake – I made it in time.

The Swim

At just gone 5-30 am we were ushered toward the lake – it was a slow walk down people stopping and talking to their partners, kids etc – I saw a few of the Andover Supporters on the way down which almost brought a tear to my eye – quite emotional at this point seeing everyone so nervous. Into the water and I went out to the right – water was green and furry and quite warm. There was a long wait before the start and I didn't hear the hooter or the starter but just saw the mad movement of hands and feet so set my watch to go and went with the flow.

I had decided to take it easier than Wimblesley so took a position at the right hand side away from the madness in the middle, though still relatively near the front. I knew this would take me longer on the swim but wanted to ensure I made it through. I swam wide round the first loop with little or no worries only bumping into a few other swimmers, other than at the turn buoys. The second lap I tried to come closer to the buoys but found sighting a major problem due to the distance between the buoys so ended up going wide again - tried to draft as much as possible and felt good, after the last turn I could see the finish about 300 metres away so kicked harder and worked harder to get the blood flowing in the legs – I was up and out of the water in 1:06.21.

I was shocked at the time I was thinking would be nearer the 1.20 mark.

The run up to T1 was a few hundred metres and the funnel was packed with supporters cheering on – It was great to hear my name shouted out from the Andover Supporting crew and upped my spirits no end. T1 was a bit slow – I couldn't find my bag and was confused by the numbering – for some reason the numbers were not in order – I requested help from a marshal and eventually got my bag – Off with the wetsuit and on with the shoes, gloves and helmet – an energy bar downed and repacked the bag and out to get my bike. Found the bike no problems and out onto the Bike course – T1 done in 6.35.

The Bike

The first section of the bike was a 16 mile leg up to Rivington, which gradually went up and up – nothing steep though – I had decided to take this easy and not get too excited – I was rather emotional after a couple of miles and shed a little tear – first part of the IM journey was over with and I knew in the next 9 miles would spot Tasha on the sidelines cheering me on – of which I did and again this gave me a huge lift. I managed the 16 miles in just under an hour. The weather at this point was changeable it wasn't too warm it had rained and the roads were wet.

Now it was onto the first of the 3 laps, pretty much starting with Shephouse Lane climb – This wasn't as bad as I thought it could have been and I managed to get up with no problems the first time round and looked forward to the decent, though took it easy as I didn't want to crash. The rest of the course was undulating but had some fast flats and slight downhill sections which was great – The first loop went by quite quick and I actually quite enjoyed it and was looking forward to getting over the climb for the 2nd time. Again the weather was changeable, with rain and hailstones and then a bit of sunshine and back to clouds. The support around the bike course was fantastic especially in the built up arrears and the Andover Supporting crew were also fantastic cheering us on all over the course.

Shephouse Lane for the 2nd time – again this wasn't too bad I had been overtaken by loads of competitors going up the climb but I would soon overtake them again on the flat and downhill or less steep sections. I talked to quite a few other Ironmen on the bike course, the banter and comradery was great. I only took water from the feed stations and refilled my aero bottle – foodwise I was on Fig Rolls and Gels, eating every 10 miles.

Onto the 3rd lap and I was still feeling pretty good – up and over the climb with no problems, slow but no problems – the sun was out now and it was very hot going up, so lots of fluids taken in afterwards. I managed to keep up good speed for the rest of the lap – I had forgotten about the climb just before T2 turnoff but managed to get up it no problems and was watching the speedo click round to 112 miles – I asked a marshal how far – he said oohhh only another mile or so – I entered T2 just shy of 114 miles on the speedo. Bike completed in 6:39.40. (At this point I felt great :D).

I got off the bike and passed it to a marshal who pointed me in the right direction I walked up towards T2 and made use of the “facilities” then entered T2 found my bag and had a slow change into my trainers, hat and put on my gel belt – I sat talking to a guy in T2 and we discussed the race – it was amusing when a marshal came up and said “You do know you are supposed to be racing not chatting” – I was in no hurry I knew the run was going to be painful. Out of T2 in 9.22.

The Run

I walked round the corner to the dogleg section of the run – it was uphill so topped up my water and walked up to the track at the top – it was muddy wet and sloppy – my calves and ankles were already sore, after 1 mile and I wasn't happy. I walked some more and then when it wasn't so muddy I tried running – managed a few hundred yards and decided I would walk and be grumpy. I took a gel and Ibuprofen and carried on walking – the surface was horrible – either sloppy mud or cobbled path. At about halfway round that section I was cheered on by Mrs B which gave me yet another boost. I attempted running again but to no avail, was just too painful on the uneven surface so resorted back to walking – I walked down the steep hill and through the feed station where I saw Paul W heading the other way, we had a quick banter then onward again.

After the hill I was on the flat and attempted to run, I managed a slow pace and ran along chatting with an Irish guy for a mile or so until I hit another incline - back to the walking – this went on for the first of the out and back section, I managed to run/jog the flats and downhill and walk up the inclines every time the pain came back. At about mile 5 or 6 the Beehive Feedstation I saw Tasha, stopped and had a chat for a few seconds – that was a great relief for both of us and gave me a great boost to carry on.

Nearing the end of the first of the out and back section I could hear the commentator declaring “You are an Ironman” to the finishers – I turned the corner and saw the crowds I had that sudden rush of emotion again and took in a big breath and ran up to the turn point, within 100 yards of the finish, to cheers from the crowds and from the Andover Supporting crew. Phew I only had another 14.8 miles to do and I still felt reasonably fresh apart from the pain in my legs, which wasn't too bad.

The next section was much of the same back to the first turnaround point with a run walk strategy Nick B caught me up and ran with me for a few miles and gave me a Nuun – massive thanks to Nick for that, I then decided to walk for a bit so off Nick went – On this part of the run I passed Jase and Paul V heading the other way – another great boost as I saw the friendly faces – this is what its all about :D.

Got to the last turnaround point and was running alongside the guy I had been talking to in T2 discussing the run and he asked me what time I was aiming for – I said anything – my main goal was to finish but ideal time would have been under 12.5 hours – he looked at his watch and said “mate you can do it you only have 8 miles and about 1 hour 20 minutes” I hadn't realised I thought I would have been way over 13 hours – Another great boost – Off again I went run walking and now very much in pain with the lower legs but on a mission – I talked to many people on the run, such great support from the crowd and the competitors –

With 3 miles to go I was struggling but new I could do the time so continued run walking – about 2 miles to go, end of the Canal tow path, theres a nasty little hill then an incline and then another incline – this nearly finished me off, if it wasn't for another athlete running with me afterwards I think I would have just slowly walked it – big thanks to him for that and taking my mind off the pain – my legs were like jelly and I could feel my self wobbling, my mind wandering and my quads killing –

Before too long I could hear that noise again – it was the commentator – I turned the corner and we only had 400m to go, I thanked my fellow athlete and told him to run on and enjoy his finish – he smiled, shook my hand and sprinted up to the finish – I gave him a few seconds then started my run – Just before the red carpet was the Andover Massive – what a reception I got from them, big big thank you to you all – I waved cheered and posed then headed towards the finish line to those most wanted words “Dan Mason YOU ARE AN IRONMAN” – as I ran through, holding back the tears I was given my medal and had my photo taken – A Marshal took my chip and I collected my T-shirt then was pointed towards the Town hall – Fantastic :D. Even better was to See Tasha waiting for me at the gate with a big smile and relief – It was done the journey was complete on Sunday 1st August 2010 I became an Ironman.

Ok for those still awake the stats were:-

BIB	AGE	STATE/COUNTRY	PROFESSION
257	36	GBR	

SWIM	BIKE	RUN	OVERALL	RANK	DIV.POS.
01:06:21	06:39:40	04:19:49	12:21:49	370	72

LEG	DISTANCE	PACE	RANK	DIV.POS.
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TOTAL SWIM	2.4 mi. (1:06:21)	1:44/100m	295	53
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BIKE SPLIT 1: 16 mi.	16 mi. (59:18)	16.19 mph
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BIKE SPLIT 2: 50 mi.	34 mi. (1:51:20)	18.32 mph
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BIKE SPLIT 3: 82 mi.	32 mi. (1:54:35)	16.76 mph
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BIKE SPLIT 4: 112 mi.	30 mi. (1:54:25)	15.73 mph
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TOTAL BIKE	112 mi. (6:39:40)	16.81 mph	301	63
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RUN SPLIT 1: 3.2	3.2 mi. (31:47)	9:56/mile
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RUN SPLIT 2: 3.9	0.7 mi. (5:44)	8:12/mile
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RUN SPLIT 3: 11.3	7.4 mi. (1:12:54)	9:51/mile
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RUN SPLIT 4: 18.7	7.4 mi. (1:14:28)	10:03/mile
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RUN SPLIT 5: 26.1	7.4 mi. (1:14:30)	10:04/mile
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RUN SPLIT 6: 26.2 mi	0.1 mi. (0:24)	4:06/mile
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TOTAL RUN	26.2 mi. (4:19:49)	9:55/mile	370	72
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TRANSITION	TIME
T1: SWIM-TO-BIKE	06:35
T2: BIKE-TO-RUN	09:22