

IMUK 2010 – Bolton – Sunday 1st August.

Not sure where to begin, I never usually do race reports as everyone gets bombarded!!!.....

.....perhaps an overview of the whole experience, just in case there are any of you out there who are thinking about an Ironman distance event in the future. I will start with the six months of training.

The Training:

With Christmas out the way and the Ironman booked for August I put together a six month training plan, this would be enough training to finish without any problems.

Due to the amount of training required just to finish an Ironman I did struggle to complete a lot of the training due to heavy work commitments and seriously considered pulling out of the race during a bike ride with Jase, Paul W and Chris T, when I had some dark thoughts.

But as the Ironman is both mental and physical I dug deep and throw myself back into the training.....

.....so, onto the Ironman weekend.

Friday 30th July:

Packed my Red/Blue/White 70.3 Transition bags and all other kit needed for the weekend, then unpacked everything, checked it and repacked it. This happen a good few times until I was happy.

The car was packed and was ready to go when Claire finished work. We left home around 3pm but didn't arrive at the Hotel until about 9pm due to the usual heavy congestion on the M6. Once Claire and I arrived we met up with Jase, Hillary, Nick B and Kelly in the bar for a catch up and few drinks.

Saturday 31st July:

I didn't get up till 9am due to my registration slot, 11 till 12. Left Claire in the room to relax and took my bike over to the servicing area to get my gears checked over, this has been an on-going problem since I have bought the bike and needed to be sure they would last the 112 miles, downstairs in the Hotel I meet Nick and Kelly, Nick had a wheel in hand which was in need of a puncture repair so we walked over together. On the way we met up with Dan and Tasha, who had just registered and informed me that I could register and rack my bike at any time.

I decided to register so gave Jase a shout and wondered over to registration, once there I collected my Backpack, stickers, etc., got tagged up with my race number and whilst there we looked around the expo and bought some rather fetching Ironman flip-flops.

Once I got back to the room Jase decided to check over my Red/Blue Transition bags, as he had already racked his bike and blue bag in T1, emptied my 70.3 bags into my new Ironman bags, then Claire, myself and the Family Briley had a walk over to T1 to rack and view the Lake we would be swimming around in the morning.

I met up with Jase, Dan and Nick and left a contingent of the Andover Triathlon supporters club to mingle, drove out to T2 to rack our red bags then thought it would be a good idea to drive around the bike route to see just what all the fuss was about with the Sheephouse Lane hill.

The hill itself was not that special, nothing that anyone who cycles the routes around Andover would have trouble with, although after the race a lot of Pro's and normo's found the bike route tough going. After the hill the route it was fairly good plenty of rolling countryside, although once past Ecclestone we got completely lost and it ended up being more of a magical mystery tour, so decided to 'Endex' and make our way back to the Hotel to get ready for the race briefing.

At the race briefing we were subjected to the usual Do's and Don'ts, finally catching up with the Paul & Mark W, Paul N and the other part of the Andover Triathlon Supporters club, we wished all well for their journey and, again, went back to the Hotel.

Back at the Hotel we collected all the WAGS and went for a pre-race meal, which included a 17 year Anniversary celebration for Jase and Hillary, then bed.

Sunday 1st August – RACE DAY:

Pre-Race:

I awoke around 3am, not as nervous as I expected. Met Jase at 04:10 and went down for some breakfast porridge. At breakfast we met up with Donna Phelan (one of the top female pro's), who we spoke to the day before, shot the breeze, etc., then made our way back to the rooms to get ready.

The Swim:

Wetsuit clad, the Andover M-dot crew walked over to T1 around 05:20, to start the race. Then we heard the guy on the speaker announce that they were about to start the walk down to the lake, oh!! A bit late, rushed into T1 to join the long line of fellow competitors and started the walk down passing all the supporters, kissed Claire and moved out into the water, surprisingly warmer than Wimbelball Lake. Before I made it to the start line the horn sounded and we were off.....

.....waited a couple of minutes for the 'washing machine' to go then made my way forward, finding clean water and getting into a good smooth rhythm. Although by the second lap I had thoughts running through my head of 'What the hell am I doing?', 'I'll just get out of the water and walk back to the Hotel'.

Got out of the water in a time of 1hr 38min not feeling good at all, Claire noticed and appeared concerned, I then thought back to my Army days whilst in training and drew strength from what I had achieved back then and got focused and came out of T1 better condition mentally. Ran past Claire and said I would see her later and started the bike leg.....

.....The Bike:

This was a fairly steady 15 mile or so out to Rivington Lake, where the start of the loop began with the infamous Sheephouse Lane hill, sat back low gear and took it easy as this was the first of three. Got to the top and went for it down the other side, then just made my way round the rest of the rolling countryside of Lancashire, the crowds were out all along the route but hadn't seen any Andover supporters, but then some roads were closed, I thought maybe they were having trouble getting out on the route.

Onto lap two, not seen Jase yet, I was expecting him to catch way before now. On the hill, same again, sat back low gear etc., only this time Fraser Cartmell powered past me up the hill it was as if I was going backwards. Don't know how they do it!!

Anyway, down the other side and into Belmont and the Wills contingent were there cheering on, much appreciated at that point. Continued on the second lap and then just before the turn off Preston Road I saw Claire and Mum & Dad cheering and shouting, it gave me such a boost see them, I then continued on, but still no Jase??

I managed to mix with a group of about 8 riders for the last few miles of lap two, but when we got to the lap split they all went right and I went left on my own for lap 3, gutted!!!. Yet again, I sat back low gear and gave my thanks and gratitude to the lap marshal, then all I could hear up the hill behind was the tones of Jase. It took 80 miles for him to chase me down, either I was going quicker than normal or he was taking it easy, anyway it was good to see a fellow Andover competitor out on the road, we got to the top of the hill, me with burning thighs, and had a break.

Along came a couple of motorcycle marshal and asked if we were OK and we replied that we were fine and making the most of the day, explaining we still had plenty of time to finish the bike leg, Jase will explain what he did in his report so 'wait out'.

We carried on as Jase left me with around 25 miles left, saw Claire and family again and told them I had about 18 miles to go, which were the most boring, tedious miles I have ever ridden back to T2, in a time of 7hrs 37min. I also managed to thank each and every marshal, three times for some, on the bike leg for their support.

The Run:

Got into T2 feeling really good, no apparent aches or pains, and who should I see walking out of the local conveniences but Jase. He was happy to wait a couple of minutes for me so we could both run the Marathon together and finally finish the journey we started together. I secretly feel Jase only waited to get the longest Andover Triathlon club transition time of the year!!!

We left T2 and walked up the hill, YES a hill out of T2 not good!!, this was the small dog leg part of the route which was extremely muddy and slippery so care was needed as we had a long way to go. We stopped at the first of many water stops and chatted to the marshals and ensured them we would run but only on the way back down, completed the dog leg and proved we could run downhill.

Waited for Jase to complete another pit stop, this wasn't the first and sure as hell wasn't the last. Started running at this point as it was a nice tarmac run into Bolton, got to the next water station and again stopped to chat, cheer on fellow competitors and fuel up. Here we collected our white band and met up with Mark W, he looked as though he was out for a training run not an Ironman.

We ran on a few miles and stopped at the Beehive Pub water station and did the usual chatting, fuelling, etc., and then noticed Claire and family stood just past the station, we hugged and chatted, I think they were a bit confused as to why we were just taking our time and having fun, but we wanted to have good experience that we would remember, so fuelled and boosted we carried on for the next 7 miles.

On route to the turnaround we heard a voice behind asking if we would mind if he ran with us, we said not at all. The guy's name was Steve, he must have thought we were having too much fun and decided it would be good to join in. It was good as we all supported each other through the next few miles, then ran down towards the finish line only to collect a red band and head back out towards the turnaround point, what a guts all that way just to get a slight taste of the finish and then to run away back to almost the start of the run.

The miles went by and we had a great laugh chatting to everybody, passing Dan, Paul W, Paul N and Nick on the way. We picked up another guy on the leg back out, Mick, so there we were a group of four making our way out to the final turnaround point, laughing and joking all the way. We finally got to the turnaround and collect our blue band, so now it was 8 miles to go until we were officially Ironmen and a lot can happen in 8 miles.

Then Steve started to struggle and tried to coax him along but to no avail and he dropped back, we explained that if either of us had issues with cramp or anything else then we would stay for 10 minutes to try and help, then we would leave the other behind and complete the journey alone.

So Jase, Mick and I carried on for the remaining miles, it was finally then when we realised why this was called an Ironman event and not a slightly tough man event, we all dug deep and continued on. Mick announced he would run on a head to see his wife and child just by the canal, we then passed his wife and she gave us explicit permission to kick his arse if he stopped, we assured her that we would. This was our third to last water stop and who should catch up but Steve, announcing he was not beaten yet!!

We then picked ourselves up and continued to completed the last 4 miles or so to the finish, just before at the last water stop we saw Jase's Codi off in the distance and went to say hello, then slowly ran the mile to the mouth of the finish, Jase wanted to cartwheel at the end so I let Steve run ahead to get his moment at the finish line, I then sprint for the finished, the crowds roared as I made my way down the red carpet, it was absolutely amazing, I crossed the in 15hrs 12min an "IRONMAN", my medal was placed over my head, photo taken and chip removed I could finally have a beer!!!!