

The Beaver Triathlon

Saturday 29th May 2010

Prologue

When given a choice between doing an Ironman 70.3 or the Beaver triathlon, I know which one offers more opportunities for *double entendres*! This I feel hasn't gone unnoticed with the event organisers who decided to organise an Olympic distance event in the morning called the 'Little Beaver' with a longer distance (aka Ironman 70.3) event in the afternoon called simply 'the Beaver'. Together the two events would comprise what was called the 'Beaverfest', which I can't help thinking sounds more like some less than sophisticated gentleman's club! Anyway I decided to do the latter event, since naturally; size is everything, fnarr, fnarr!

In reality though the word Beaver comes from the locals' pronunciation of the location; Belvoir, or to be precise, Belvoir Castle in north Leicestershire and unusually, both events were held on a Saturday.

Race Day

It was overcast with occasional rain when I arrived to rack up. Keeping stuff dry in transition was problematic to say the least and as I pondered over this dilemma, I could hear the PA system announce finishers of the Little Beaver triathlon, including a certain Nikki Fleming from Andover!

Swim – 1900m

There was bit of a walk to the start of the swim from transition, in fact 400 metres, which caught a few people out in the waves before me as they arrived late for their start. Thankfully I arrived in time and was able to catch the pre-swim brief. I even managed to do a time check with the starter allowing me to start my stopwatch exactly 4 ½ minutes before the start of my wave so that I wouldn't have to worry about starting my timepiece later.

I along with some other less confident swimmers decided to start on the far edge of the start line and we collectively agreed not to get in each other's way; a rare example of cooperation as when we started, we generally did keep out of each others way, although it didn't last long when somewhat more ambitious swimmers who started behind us decided to push through. The swim was two laps of the Belvoir Castle Lake with an extra bit on the first lap. I generally felt comfortable on the first lap but on starting the second I took in more water than I generally do, and had to stop to clear my lungs. There was a moment of panic as I struggled to get my breath back but once the airwaves were cleared I continued and soon got back to business. In fact things would get better after that as I soon realised I was gaining on the tail end of the swimmers from the previous wave started 10 minutes earlier and I found a bit of extra vigour to get me to the pontoon at the end of the swim.; though as always seems to be the case, climbing on to the pontoon was difficult and required a helpful marshal to intervene.

T1

A rather long trot on grass to T1 from the lake; not particularly difficult, but something you could easily do without in the grand scheme of things, but then it did allow a rather more leisurely peeling off of the wetsuit. Then in transition it was on with socks and cycling shoes and then a short trip to the bike mount line.

Bike – 50 miles

The route was a 4 lap affair, starting with a short modest climb out of the castle grounds. Nothing too serious, but again not the thing you wanted straight after a long swim. However, a nice long downhill

section followed and this gave to me the opportunity to try and get some life back in to my legs even though with a lot of standing water on the roads from the rain, you did have to take your life in your hands a bit. This was followed by a very long stretch that was slightly inclined with occasional flats before a flat twisty bit through one of the local villages. Though flat, this bit was quite challenging as there was a strong head wind that just sucked all the energy out of you. This was then followed by a nasty climb, which was also facing in to the wind, though it did have two short plateaus that did offer a few seconds of respite. At the 'top' it was then fairly undulating, but with more downs and ups back to Belvoir Castle for the next lap.

My legs took a long time to get going after the swim; in fact most of the first lap, but it did mean I was able to push on the subsequent laps. Passing quite a few cyclists on the downhill sections, though that might be because I had more bravado as on the uphill sections they generally faired better than I did! There were also a notable number of cyclists on the side of the road repairing punctures, which didn't surprised me as most of the roads were not in very good condition, in fact quite bumpy; the tooth filling loosening type.

T2

Near the end of the last lap, I began to get severe pins and needles in my feet and by the time I arrived in transition, I had lost all sensation in my feet. I've had this problem before at longer distances and normally by bashing my toes with my hands, this gets the blood flowing again and the discomfort goes. Unfortunately it didn't work on this occasion and not wanting to waste any more time in T2, I put my running shoes on and left for the run.

Run – 13.1 miles

This was a rather undulating 3 lap affair. From transition, the run took us first off-road then on-road up to the Castle. The on-road bit was particularly undulating, with a steep climb up the castle itself, which on a positive did offer some splendid views when you did get to the top. I struggled on this climb as my feet had still not come back to life and my legs felt they were about to give up as well.

However, the really good thing about being at the top is that the only way you can go now is down. And a nice long down bit it was, allowing my legs to regain some life and my feet to come back to life. The route then continue pass transition onto grass before heading off back on road to the far end of the castle grounds over a bridge near where the swim was and then a steady climb to the one turning point on the course to retrace back to transition.

It was at this point that I decide to adopt a very popular strategy. As my legs were not in the best of moods I went for the walk up the uphill sections and run everywhere else approach. This I put in to great effect on the second lap as I managed to convincingly pass people on the downhill sections after they had just struggled passing me on the previous uphill sections.

However, by the third and final lap, my legs were having enough and even on the downhill sections they were reluctant to put in any significant effort. As I came to the end of the third lap and peeled off towards the finish, I can honest say it was an absolute relief to cross that finishing line!

Stats and Postscript

My finish time was 5:50:15; my slowest at this distance; perhaps I'm getting too old for this sort of thing! However, most of the slower time was virtually all down to a slow run of 2:21:53 as the swim was 0:37:52; on par with previous efforts, but actually better when you consider the 400m trot to transition, and similarly the bike at 2:45:03 was only slightly down on what I was expecting. I was 65th of 98 in my age group (M40-44); the biggest age group incidentally. I was also 276th of 400 finishers. A further 25 people started but didn't finish.

In a few weeks time I have the rather boringly named Ironman UK 70.3 to do, but in the meantime I can honest say 'I've done the Beaver'! Fnarr, fnarr!