

## Fairbrother's Hobart Triathlon 2008

I have recently returned from competing in perhaps the most exciting race I have ever been a part of held in Hobart and would like to take the time to give a quick recount of the trip and to thank the many people who helped me get to Hobart.

In anticipation of yet another scorching Perth weekend I was quite relieved to know that the predicted maximum temperature in Hobart was hovering around the mid 20's and a near enough to perfect 24°C for the race day. I travelled to Tasmania as a part of the TWA Zoot Junior Pathways Squad along with Brad Brown, Head Coach Grant Landers, his wife Holly, and their baby, the 17 month old 'rascal' Tyson.

After hearing several perhaps exaggerated stories of sub-zero water temperature and a ride with hills that are steeper and longer than the dreaded Mount Street, I couldn't help but feel a little bit nervous, especially after a fairly lack-lustre race build up with injuries that limited my swimming and running training.

I was pleasantly surprised to see the fuss that was made about the upcoming triathlon in Hobart, as several people in our hotel seemed to know that Brad and I were there for the race. It was also pleasing to see that Triathlon received some very well deserved attention in the media and the only sporting news that stopped triathlon getting a spot on the back page of the Mercury (Hobart's local paper) was Gilly's latest test century.

Registration and race briefing, on the afternoon before the race, was perhaps the most intimidating times, being surround by hundreds of elite triathletes many of whom were bigger than me, and all of whom seemed more confident about the following day's race. I even had the pleasure of being introduced to Beijing hopeful Erin Densham.

Race day kicked off with the age groupers battling the Southern Ocean and the Hobart hills at 7am while Brad and I were still asleep. Next up at 11am were the ITU Junior girls, who were to race the same course as the Junior boys, the Elite males and females. The race was run and won by the dominant Queensland trio of Ashleigh Gentle, Emma Jackson and Courtney Dutton. The race organisers opted for a 'spectator friendly' 2.5km cycle lap, which took some of the fastest cyclists 4 minutes to complete. Unfortunately due to ITU rules, if somebody is lapped by the leaders on the cycle, they are forced to pull out of the race. This left Brad and I with the single goal of simply finishing the race and not getting lapped by the competition.

This is where it got exciting, jumping into the water which by 12:30 had thankfully warmed a few degrees, with 61 other boys ready to race in mine and Brad's first draft legal ITU Triathlon. The first 100m of the swim was the most intense, although I was told what to expect, so I wasn't surprised when I received the occasional blow to the head and yank on the ankle. Jumping out of the swim, thinking the hard stuff was over, I was soon to find out that I was wrong, as jumping onto a pack is more challenging than it sounds. Unfortunately due to some mechanical difficulties, my chain came off, which left me to do the entire cycle with one other young man, who I assume (seeing the cuts and grazes on his arm) had also run into some difficulties. We spent most of the ride fending off the race leader Josh Amberger who came very close to lapping us. Brad on the other hand had a very pleasing ride getting off the bike in the 3<sup>rd</sup> pack. After that we threw what very little we had left at the run. The run, to my great dismay, consisted of 5 1km laps which had the same deadly climb up Murray Street as the ride.

The next race was the pros with the women leaving 6 minutes before the men. This was an amazing race to watch. Seeing Courtney Atkinson and Dan Wilson run a 15:32 5km off the bike was incredible. Fellow West Australian and UWA Triathlete Felicity Sheedy-Ryan crossed the line as the first under 23 female, making her the new U23 Australian Sprint Distance Champ.

I would like to thank all the organisers of the TWA Zoot Junior Pathways squad: Brian Kempson, Kim Lees, Phil Gregson, as well as the squad sponsors Zoot and Rudy Project, for giving Brad and I the opportunity to travel to Tasmania to race at such a high level, as well as assisting us with the finance of travelling over east for a race. All in all, the race in Hobart, for Brad and I, was the most amazing and inspiring experience and I would urge all up-and-coming junior triathletes to get involved in the development squads set up by TWA, and take the opportunity to gain valuable racing experience.

James Lewin