

World Triathlon | Triathlon World Championships | CHALLENGE FAMILY wear triathlon!

Long Distance ALMERE - AMSTERDAM

Congratulations/Gefeliciteerd

Niall Kavanagh

Aquabike

01:14:27 05:33:37 06:54:30

12th September 2021

World Championship Aquabike Race in Almere, Holland - 3.8Km swim and 180km bike

Cruised through the 3.8Km swim and now I've just passed the 150km mark, with only 30km to go. This is where the real test begins! Cycled 8000 km in the last 8 months which has delivered me to this point in good shape and now it's time to find out how much hurt can I handle. Time now to let it rip, to bury myself on the bike! As Sean Kelly used say about bike racing, it's not the fastest man who wins but the one who can suffer the most!

Triathlons without the run are starting to suit me better as I age because running injuries are becoming too easy to come by. So when I heard of the inaugural Irish Championship "Aquabike" race in Lough Cutra, Galway in 2019, I signed up and then John Corcoran and myself won our age groups in the 1.9km swim and 90K bike race. We both qualified for the European and World Championships, but Covid came along and the races were delayed until 2021. The European race was in Austria in June but because of quarantine rules and travel restrictions it wasn't possible to go. But the World championship race in September in Holland was more accessible. The World Championship Aquabike was held in conjunction with the World Championship Long distance Triathlon race, ie 'Ironman distance' and it is run under the 'CHALLENGE' brand. Almere is just 25 minutes North on the train from Schipol airport in Holland. It is a new green city built on reclaimed land with a wonderful biking infrastructure. Almere was celebrating 40 years of this long distance triathlon, only 2nd in longevity to Kona in Hawaii. The set up and infrastructure behind this event is second to none and even though there was a lot more paperwork to enter and register due to Covid, their people were friendly and helpful. The swim is in a freshwater lake, lovely at 20 degrees and the

bike was 2 laps of a flat 90KM in the countryside with the only difficulty being the headwinds in this flat open countryside.

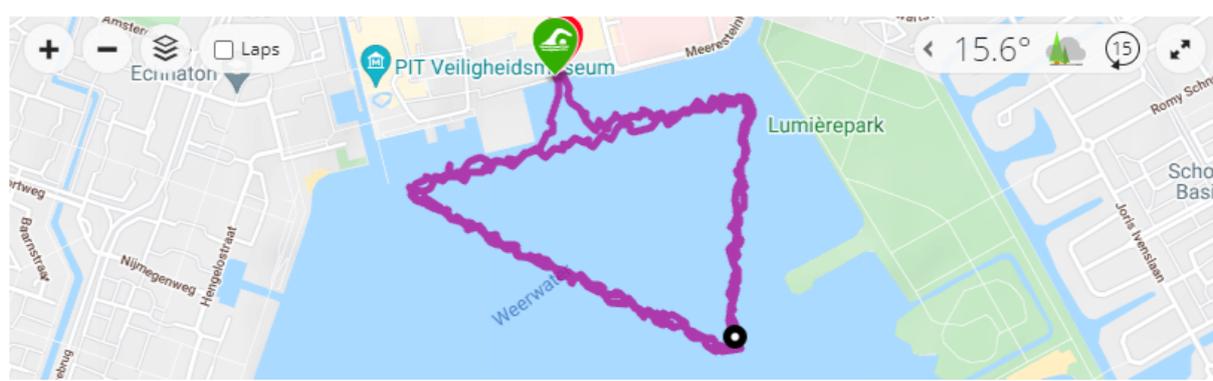


MULTISPORT BY NIALL KAVANAGH ON 12 SEPTEMBER 2021 @ 8:34 AM

Almere Multisport
Event Type: Uncategorized ▾ Course: -- ▾ Gear: Add

6:49:46	1:14:18 1:53 min/100m	1:38.6 1.5 kph	5:33:49 32.2 kph

3,936 m Distance	1:14:18 Time	1:53 min/100m Avg Pace	819 C Calories
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So the first off were the Triathlon pros, followed by age groupers, then the Aquabike age groupers. Water was gorgeous and the rolling starts that are now popular eliminate the usual madness of the mass start. I was very happy with my swim and clocked 1hr 14 mins. The sessions with Eimear in Derrynounce and Maganey had paid off and I felt strong getting out of the water. Now for the 180k spin. With the help of our Coach Mick Scully, I had trained differently for this race. Over the winter on Zwift, I got to understand Power and WATTS and how to cycle monitoring watts rather than speed or heart rate. For anyone interested in Power, Jonathan Forrestal has great knowledge of it and we had a very fruitful discussion while he was running his 128Km in July. My Functional Threshold Power, FTP, in August was at 220 watts and for an endurance event like this, the plan was to cycle at 70 to 75% of FTP, i.e. between 155 to 165 watts. I had bought special pedals "Assioma" which measures your power output in watts and displays it on the Garmin. The plan was to average 160 watts for the whole race and keep a heart rate at little less than 150bpm. My main Garmin page was set to show only power, heartrate and distance. Those were the numbers that mattered to me. If I could control the power output and not "burn my matches" early on in the race, I could ride a controlled race whatever the conditions were. So when the wind was behind me, keeping the power at 160 watts, it got me to speeds of 40km/hr while against the wind with the same power the speed dropped to 26km/hr. But keeping a steady output was the plan that I had agreed with Mick. But when I got to the last hour, the last 30Km, then I could let rip and if I did blow up' I would be close enough to the finish so I wouldn't lose too much time anyway. But I wanted to finish it leaving nothing in the tank and so glad that I had no run ahead of me.

The course was flat as flat could be with 99% of the time down in the aero position. There was a long straight section for 40 Km on a polder with the sea on one side and wide open farm land on the other. Nothing but straight flat road ahead, hardly any spectators and just watching my Garmin and turning the pedals. On the first lap, the wind was behind us on the polder and I was averaging 40Km/hr though on the 2nd lap the wind had shifted to a cross wind and this section was slower. I have never seen as many motorbike marshals, so there was no chance of a helpful draft, and anyone that chanced it were caught and spent 5 mins in the sinbins along the way! So I raced clean, no messing, felt strong and watched the kilometres falling away. Once the first 90km lap was done the 2nd seemed shorter because I knew the course now. Mid-way through the 2nd lap I was averaging 158 watts. So with about 30km to go I spotted this American guy, who I figured was in my age group. He looked good, fabulous bike, star spangled socks and I thought to myself as I passed him, "there is no way I am letting you come by me! I am ready for the hurt locker now and you are going to have to suffer so bad, because I am going to bury myself on the bike for this last 30km." When racing, my mind comes up with some crazy some ideas, but whatever it takes to motivate myself, I'll take! And so for the last 30k, into a headwind, I kept low and drove it on as hard as I could, passed many cyclists and was passed by no one! My average watts finished at 160, right on target and the legs were burning and well and truly shot. My plan was for 6 hours in the bike but came in at 5hrs 33min. Delighted with myself and thrilled to have had the chance to challenge myself and really push it out and not just wobble home but finish like a train on fire!

A lot of time, energy and preparation had gone into this race and it truly is a fantastic feeling when you deliver the performance you hoped possible. So many things can go wrong, I am very grateful for everything going right on the day. My overall time of 6 hours 54 mins put me in 14th position in my age group for a World Championship. The calibre of competition was awesome, the 2nd place guy in my group was an USA Olympic cyclist who clocked 40Km/hr for the 180K! The bikes on display there were something else too, I realised my own bike is a little dated like myself, so I'm writing a long letter to Santa Claus this Christmas!

Huge thanks to my No 1 supporter, Madeleine whose smiling face at the finish line is always a delight to see. To Murt Kean of Race Right Bicycles who sorted me out with wheels and a Bike Box and showed me the tricky mechanical art of packing a bike for air travel. To Mick Scully, our cycling coach, whose advice and training got me as fit on the bike as I have been in a long time and has raised the bar in our club. Thanks to Kieran Hoey of Right Bike Cycles who sourced me a lovely Aero helmet, it worked a treat. To Eimear Matthews who has got us all swimming further and further and provides a safe environment for us all to swim. Finally to all the lads and girls I cycle with regularly, you are great company and thanks for waiting for me at the top of the hills!

ROAD CYCLING ▾ BY NIALL KAVANAGH ON 12 SEPTEMBER 2021 @ 9:56 AM



Almere Road Cycling

Event Type: Uncategorized ▾ Course: -- ▾ Gear: Add

178.41 km
Distance

5:33:23
Time

32.1 kph
Avg Speed

172 m
Total Ascent

160 W
Avg Power








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12th September 2021

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