

EINZELSTARTER SINGLE PARTICIPANT URKUNDE

Dave Murphy



Swim
0:59:34

Bike
5:20:36

Run
3:26:47

Swim+Bike+Run
9:52:41

Platz Kategorie: 36

Platz Overall: 355

Platz Geschlecht: 331



Herbert Eckstein

Herbert Eckstein - Landrat
Schirmherr

Ralph Edelhöfer

Ralph Edelhöfer - 1. Bürgermeister
Schirmherr

Felix Wolchshöfer

Felix Wolchshöfer - TEAMCHALLENGE GmbH
Veranstalter

Acknowledgment

I feel it appropriate to start on the topic of sacrifice. Yes there are the obvious sacrifices that had to be made like staying off the beer for the last 6 months and not eating cake and all the nice things in life. These are the sacrifices I had to make, however, the ones my wife and family had to endure were what made my achievement possible, I could not have done it without their commitment and support. I would also like to acknowledge and thank the members of Trilogy for their support and well wishes in the approach to and during my event.

The luck of the Irish

I made the decision to go long early last year and decided to go for Challenge Roth, it had been on my bucket list for a while now. With 3400 individual places and 650 participants in the relay, it is the biggest long distance race in the world. However, if you want to secure a place you better have fast broadband, it sells out in a matter of seconds. I failed miserably and missed out. Then one fateful morning I awoke to a notification on Facebook "Aoife McEvoy tagged you in a post" what can this be? I thought to myself. There were 67 places available where payment had not successfully been made. We both applied and were offered an entry. I took mine with both hands. Aoife decided not to accept her offer as she had already committed to defending her National Long Distance title in Kerry so it became a solo adventure for me.

The shopping

Roth itself is only a small town and has very limited accommodation. There are a few small towns surrounding Roth which also have a limited number of beds. Nuremberg is the nearest city and has loads of accommodation. As a late entrant I ended up in a Hotel outside Nuremberg just off the motorway, very similar to the Maldron in Portlaoise. Flights were secured, out with Ryanair and home with Aerlingus, the bike and bag travelled with Tribike Transport (formerly Ship My Bike) and the car hired from Enterprise and insurance got with carhireexcess.ie

The plan

Having only competed in sprints and Caroline Kearney duathlon in 2018 the endurance wasn't there. I came up with a rough plan which involved building up my endurance from November to March and then get more specific with help from a Coach to do a bit of fine tuning for the last 3 months. Good coaches can be expensive and it wasn't in the budget considering the costs already incurred. That was plan A, enter plan B. I was lucky enough that a 6 month training plan that was designed for an athlete of a similar ability to me fell into my possession. I was more confident following this program and made changes to it that suited me, nothing major.

The preparation

Considering this was a 6 month venture I feel very lucky to have only picked up 1 injury that cost me only 5 days of training. The plan had the usual incremental increases in volume and I managed to stay disciplined and completed almost everything I set out to do. As time passed and I got closer to seeing a bit of light at the end of the tunnel the longer sessions got harder. When I say harder, I actually mean mentally harder. I had gone up to 6hr bike rides and down to 5hrs and then down to 4hrs but this cycle had to be repeated one more time. So getting back up to a 6hr spin was not too bad. It was when I was to do 5 & 4hrs that the real test of commitment started. If I was out to do 4hrs I had to battle all my demons to complete the task. I would be trying to convince myself that at this stage of the game I had enough done and 2hrs would be as good as 4hrs.

I would summon all of my will power and persuaded myself to do another hour which would be 3hrs and more than enough but wait, the plan says 4hrs. Ok one step at a time, I had a plan, if I cycle for one more hour in a direction that would leave me an hour from home I would have no choice but to complete the 4hrs I set out to do. I know most of you are scratching your heads at this logic but this actually worked. It is very important to complete any session you set out to do, to ensure you get the desired physical adaptations. On a more important note my victories in these mental challenges are far more beneficial for race day, particularly when the going gets tough. When the taper period finally arrived I was more than willing to back off. Race ready and raring to go!



The 4th discipline. Practice nutrition they said, check!

The journey & Pre race necessities

A 6:10 Ryanair flight to Munich was waiting for me. This meant my alarm clock was set for 2:30am yes AM. Since I was travelling solo (thanks Aoife) on this one I was on the lookout for telltale signs that might suggest there were like minded people heading in the same direction. Alas an arm decorated with a Garmin 920xt, "success". At the risk of coming across like Jim Carey in the Cable Guy I asked if Roth was their destination. I was delighted to have met 3 sound lads from Tyrone. When we arrived in Munich airport it was time to collect the hire car. A car is a necessary evil for Challenge Roth. Not only has Roth a split transition but the finish area is another area altogether and the registration area and T1 are also 12k apart so a bit of logistical planning is required. The airport was about an hour from Roth and another 20 mins would see me at my hotel. I decided to go straight to Roth and register, collect my bike and see this famous expo. The first 2 were easy but as I strolled around the expo which I can only describe as,,, actually I wouldn't be able to do it justice, it was massive or huge or gargantuan whichever of those is the biggest, you know what I mean. While wandering around in amazement I managed to spot a Tri an Mhi top and again approached with caution, 3 sound lads from Meath and a lass from Dublin. Later I bumped into a guy from Cork, it's amazing how we can pick out the Irish in a crowd. Everything went to plan on the run up [except when I thought the car had either been stolen or towed but that's a story for another day] and I soon found myself in the hotel waiting for a 3:30am alarm clock to start this shindig.



Transition at 5:05am and its lashing rain.

Rock and roll time

Alarm bellowing in my ear at 3:30am I jumped out of the nest and got to work. Like a military operation everything was planned and laid out from the night before. First put the milk on the muesli and eat while put on the race number tattoos. Opps' not the start to the day I wanted, first tattoo was applied upside down. Thank you John Lambe for the sleeved Trisuit and nobody saw my stupidity. Out to the car and it was lashing rain, completely not forecasted.

I drove to one of the 3 parking areas and parked up with ease again the German efficiency very evident. A short 10 minute walk to T1 which was already a bustling hive of activity. I was in plenty of time and was soaking up the atmosphere. I even headed down to the Pro area to watch them set up, it's great to see these people in the flesh even if they appear to be mere mortals they are in my eyes super heros. The rain stopped around 7am and the day really started to brighten up.

The race is traditionally started with a blast from a cannon and the release of several hot air balloons. I didn't see the cannon but it wasn't small, it blasted for the start of every wave and I jumped each time, the ground shook and not from me landing. The first of 22 waves were off at 6:30am and the Pro men were first followed 3mins later by the pro women, next were the Sub 9ers and then every 5 mins waves of 200. I was in wave 12 and time was passing fast, nerves were kicking in and I even thought I was going to vomit at one stage. In typical wave start fashion we were corralled as we approached the swim start. Once each wave was started the next wave was allowed in to warm up for 5 mins. In the run up to the race it was announced that for the first time in 39 years Roth could be a non wetsuit swim. On the day the water temperature was recorded 24.4 degrees which made it wetsuit legal by 0.1 degree. Finally I was in the water which was like bath water, warm up completed and ready to rock.



The Start of the day

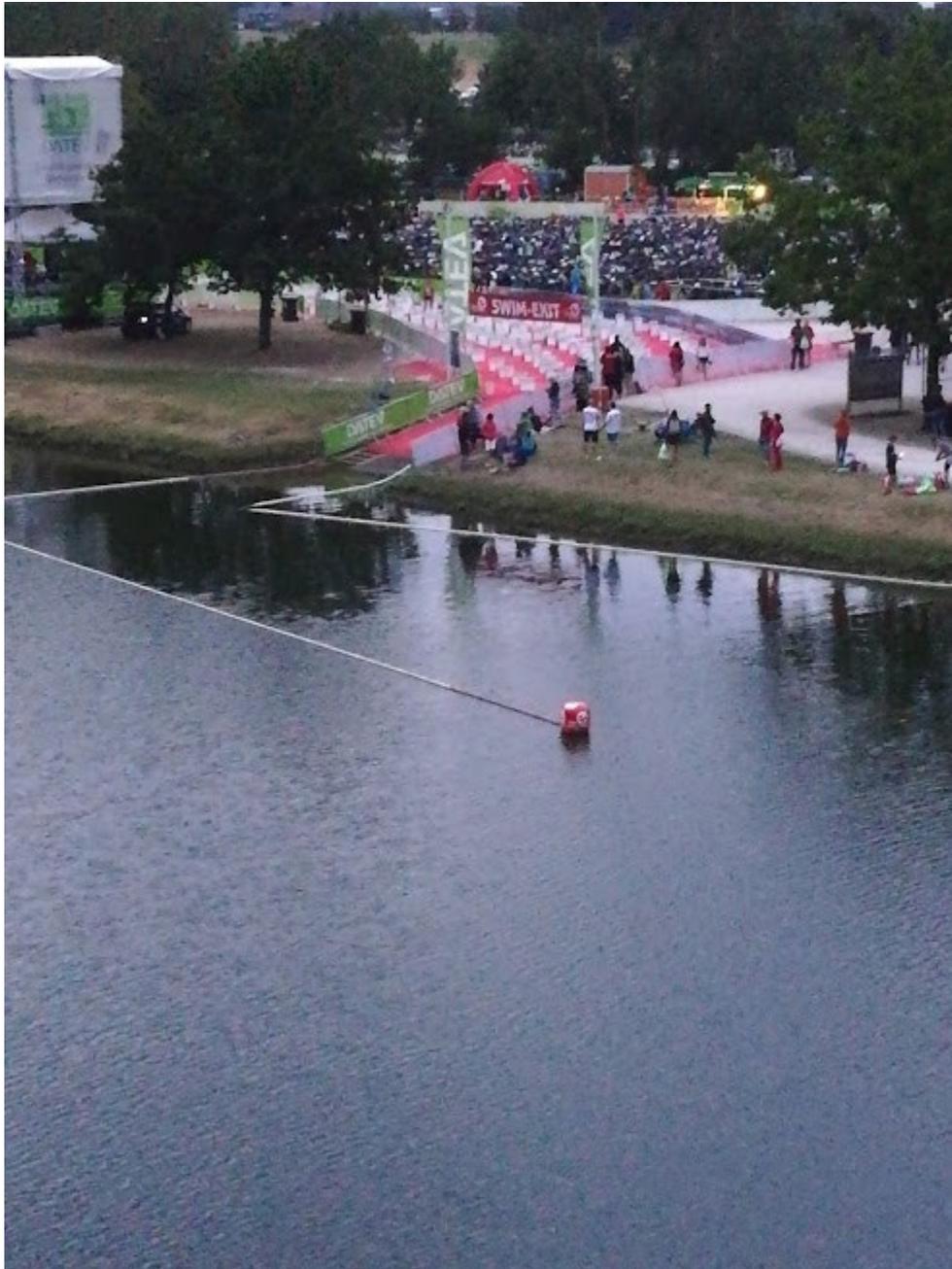


The bad start to the day.

The swim

The swim took place in a canal approximately 70m wide, this is a functional canal and the lough gates and ships using it kept the water moving preventing it from going stagnant. There was little or no visibility under water but the water was clean. I took up a position at the front of the pack and eagerly waited what would be the last sound of the cannon I would hear. With no count down or warning of any kind "BANG" even though my feet were not on the ground I jumped one last time. We were off, as I was at the front of the pack it was a comfortable start with little or no fighting for position. I would assume behind me was civilised enough as there is plenty of room in the canal. After about 2 mins of swimming I could see 3 swimmers gone well up the canal and 2 just in front of me. I sat on the feet of one of them for a few mins and then decided I wasn't going fast enough. I went to the front after 500m and swam the rest of the swim solo. It wasn't long before I caught up with the slower swimmers from the waves ahead and had to meander through a minefield of elbows and breast stroking heels. At times it would get very congested and a change of course was required. Every couple of hundred meters or so along the canal bank were signs indicating the distance that you had covered which I found quite useful. It left me in a position to be able to break down the swim into sections.

The banks of the canal had thousands of people supporting and cheering. As I approached the swim exit I noticed a large pack just ahead of me so I decided it would be best to exit before this group if I could. I gave one last surge and passed the majority of the pack to exit with ease. One down and 2 to go, 3.8k swim completed in 59:34 just 26 seconds ahead of schedule.



The swim exit. Note the rows of bags containing cycling gear on the red carpet.

T1

Running towards my bike bag which I wasn't sure of where it was but knew I was going in the right direction I made eye contact with one of the many volunteers in the bag collection area and she yells number, number, number, jasus I thought to myself I better tell her what my number is.

I was frantically looking for a bag that correlated with my number when seconds later the volunteer shoves a bag into my chest and again began yelling GO! GO! GO! So I did what I was told. Into a huge tent, again full of volunteers, one grabbed my bag and emptied it out on the floor. She also helped me out of my wetsuit and packed it away as I got ready for a swift exit. I quickly thanked her and legged it out of the tent and past an aid station and grabbed my trusty steed. As I exited T1 there were many other athletes also exiting so I erred on the side of caution and took my time while others were behaving like it was a super sprint.

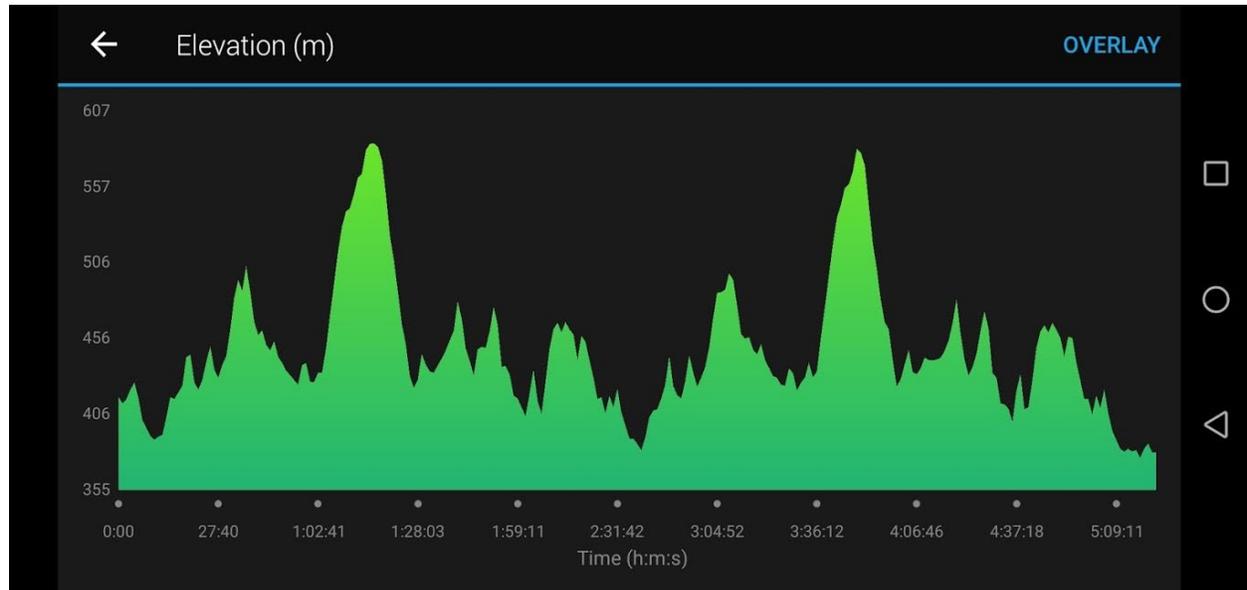


The eager beaver and its passenger, good or bad omen?

The Bike

While this is the longest of the 3 disciplines it was quite uneventful for me. The surface was good but I was lead to believe it was better, no potholes but bumpy in places. There were aid stations every 17.5k where you could get water, isotonic drink, bananas, energy bars, gels and god knows what else. There were no hedges separating the road side from the fields like we have in Ireland. This meant you felt the full brunt of any wind whether it was a head, cross or tailwind. The wind was blowing at a steady 15kph which wasn't too bad. The course was fairly congested for the first 30k or so and then I began to see a bit of open road in front of me. Around 75k came the highlight of the whole race Solarberg Hill. It was like a stage of the Tour De France with thousands of spectators lining this hill leaving only enough space for you to get through while they shouted encouragement like I have never before witnessed, FANTASTIC EXPERIENCE!!! and we had to do this hill twice. There was multiple hotspots on the course where there was music and MCs calling out your name and offering words of encouragement as you crossed the intermediate timing mats. Drafting was not an issue which I was surprised with considering the numbers involved. Roth has a unique deterrent for potential drafters. If you get caught drafting, not only do you get a 5 min penalty but you also have to do an extra 1k at the start of the run. This 1k loop is not part of the course so if you're running it everyone knows you are a cheat. There was only one real hill on the bike course which you had to do twice.

I recorded a total of 1456m of elevation which is far from flat but not too difficult either. For me the hardest part of the cycle was not drilling it, I had a plan and needed to stick with it. The only negative of the bike section was the 3-4 minutes I lost due to nature calls but you would expect that after spending 5:20:36 on a bike. As I approached T2 I was surprised how well I was feeling and readied myself for the dismount.



Bike course profile 1460m of elevation

T2

With the feet out and on top of the shoes I cautiously hit the tarmac and grabbed my Garmin off the bike. Another unique feature of this race is there are loads of volunteers at the dismount line ready to take your bike from you and rack it so you can go straight for your bag with your running gear. As soon as I offloaded the bike, volunteers started repeatedly shouting "number to the front" I was thinking Jesus take a chill pill I'm not on the run course yet. I eventually conceded and soon realised why they wanted numbers to the front. Again my bag was shoved into my chest by a volunteer and I was instructed to go!. They needed to see my number to get my run bag for me. Into a tent again and I was seated by a lady who emptied my run bag on the floor and helped me with my socks and runners and finally handed me my gels. I thanked her and went on my merry way in search of a marathon.

The run

I left T2 like a Thompsons Gazelle being chased by a pride of Lions across the Serengeti National Park. I knew I was going too fast but couldn't help myself. The crowd bawling and cheering words of encouragement had me running on adrenaline. I clocked a 4:11 first kilometer and quickly had a stern word with myself to stick to the plan. The hill I was about to climb helped me back off the pace (yes Sinead the hill). The on course support from the supporters to the volunteers was second to none. The aid stations were every 2.5k and closer at times. At the aid stations there were about 15-20 volunteers all handing out something different. First you would be offered wet sponges to cool yourself down then water followed by energy drink, Cola, Gel, bananas, lemons with salt, salted crackers, jellies, watermelon, energy bars and much more that I hadn't time to investigate. I stuck with the sponges, water, cola and a few Gels. I tried some salted crackers at one stage and made the mistake of trying to eat it. Crackers are hard enough to eat in the comfort of your home never mind when you're running.

I quickly learned I could get the salt I needed by just putting the cracker salt side down on my tongue and spitting out the cracker later rather than chewing it. It was around 8k when the mind games started.

The bounce was gone from my legs but I was still travelling well. I started to think about how far I had to go rather than how far I have come. I was also questioning myself regarding the pace I was running at. I told myself that this is what I trained for and I have the necessary work done to pull this off. I was also thinking, this hurts and then telling myself cop on it's supposed to hurt. I stuck to the plan and had many moments like this throughout. I only recorded 133m of elevation on the run course and with the first 30k mostly along the canal on a dirt trail similar to the VEC track the climbing came when I was really getting tired. Kilometers 31 -35 had 40m of elevation and this is also where I got a few darts in the calf. I had to back off to ensure the cramp didn't set in proper. I got to an aid station and got some of my favourite salty crackers. Topped up on salt I pushed on again. Halfway up this hill came my biggest challenge "myself". I wouldn't say I hit the wall but I was thinking "feck it I'm going to have a great time anyway so why am I killing myself". The answer to my predicament came from a conversation I had with my Ironmanbuddy from 2014. I recalled being asked if I had a secret time in mind, to which I replied yes and stated it involved running a 3:30 marathon, the silence was deafening so I proceeded to say, that's only 5 min per k, still a silence hung over the one sided discussion. I then reassured her that I know what I have just said and I was going to go for it. Not sure where it went from there because I was shocked that I had left the great Sinead Wearen speechless. Any way I told myself that she would be tracking me and willing me on (how right I was there) every step of the way and I didn't want to let her or myself down. I sucked it up and forged ahead. Finally, I got to the top of the hill and had no idea how the legs were going to handle the high turnover of the downhill.

I knew I had done a 59 min swim and a 5:20 bike but what I didn't know was how long the transitions had taken me. This left me knowing I was close to my goal but didn't know which side of the target I was. I know it was only a click of a button to find out but I didn't want to know. I was still moving well and I didn't want to be influenced by the time. This tactic wasn't part of the plan but I think it was a wise move. Back at the top of the hill, I launched into a descent and was motoring towards the bottom when another dart in the calf. I noticed I was running in the middle of the road so moved closer to the verge in case I cramped and had to do down, at least the forest verge would be kinder to me than the tarmac. The bottom of the hill left about 3k to go. The high turnover of the downhill had left its mark, I was no longer moving as freely as I had been. I called on the fact that I had one shot at this target of mine and I'm so close now so hold it together. I advanced with purpose knowing that I was being watched by an army of Trilogy members who would have ran the last few k for me if they could, I had called on this factor many times throughout the race. Soon I reached the carpet which meant I was close to the finish. There wasn't going to be a sprint finish but I didn't want to look like road kill when I reached the finishing arena.



The run course profile with 133m of elevation.

The last stride

There were thousands of people in the arena all clapping and cheering for finishers whether they knew you or not. The arena was shaped like a square which meant you were at the centre of attention for a minute or so depending on how much energy you had left. I will remember this arena for the rest of my life. The atmosphere was only second to Solarberg Hill, that said I was happier to see the finish line. Once I crossed the line I put my hands on my knees where they stayed for at least 2 mins. A young lady hung a finishers medal around my neck which might as well have been a concrete block, it nearly toppled me over. She proceeded to ask me if I was ok, I replied yes, I just need a minute. She then left me and returned with a medic at which point I said "NO" you're not getting me. I stood up as straight as I could but stumbled a few steps backwards. I called on all my composure to steady myself and ensured the medic I was fine as I left the arena. There was a short walk from the arena to the recovery area. As I left the arena it occurred to me I have no idea what time I had done. I looked at my trusty Garmin only to see that I had exceeded a target that I thought was ambitious by over 7 minutes and registered a 9:52:41. I have thought long and hard about sharing this part but I was overcome with emotion, my breathing became very shallow and started to cry. I have no idea why but it felt good.

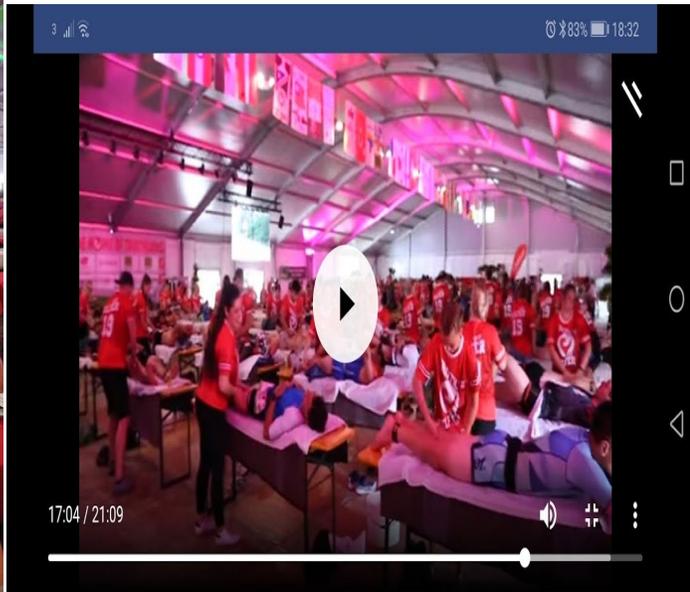
The recovery area

The fatigue/stiffness was setting in and I could barely walk. I had 3 options available to me. I took a seat before making such an important decision.

1. Shower
2. Food and lots of it.
3. Massage

I sat there shaking, not knowing if I wanted to get sick or eat. One of the Tyrone lads I had been tagging along with came up to me and we exchanged congratulations. He then confirmed what I thought by saying I didn't look good and suggested I go for a shower, so I did. In typical mainland Europe fashion the ladies peeled off trisuits and stood in the queue for the showers in their birthday suits. The suggestion to get a shower was the right one as I returned to the food and ate my own body weight in rolls, pasta, fruit, yoghurt, cakes, soup and for the first time in a week a murdered a coffee. I sat there constantly eating for at least 30 mins.

Feeling much better I decided to join the queue for a massage. There was an army of people giving massages and I only had to wait 5 minutes for mine. I was treated to a nice gentle refreshing rub which lasted 25 - 30 minutes, great service. I returned to the food area and had another coffee and a few more pieces of cake before leaving to head out to the finish arena to soak up some of the positive atmosphere.



The race brief venue that doubled up as the recovery area and a poor image of half the army of physio's.

Bike and car recovery

The finish area was about 1 k from T2 where my bike, bike bag and swim bag were waiting for me. This is also where you return your timing chip so as not to incur a €50 charge. The hard part was passing the Tribike transport wagon knowing I would have to double back the 500m to return the bike for the trip home and then return to T2 to get the shuttle bus back to the car park. There were 3 fields come car parks and we were dropped in the middle of the 3. I eventually found the car and set a course for my hotel. I reached the hotel for about 11pm. I sat down to check in on Facebook and was overwhelmed by the support and well wishes that had been directed my way throughout the day. I didn't feel like sleeping but once I put my head down I was gone.

The trip home

Germany is a strange place, they drive on the wrong side of the road and then shout at you. The only radio station I could find played songs from the 80s i.e. Smokey, Simply Red and the Communards. I paid 70cent for a 50cent voucher to use a toilet at a service station, like whats the story there. They have sausages as big as a babies leg and call them Bratwurst. I had a curried Bratwurst on the way back to the airport and would recommend it. The motorway network over there is exceptional and I used Google Maps to find my way around with ease. The return of the Hire car was as easy as it gets, I followed the instructions of the man in the hi-vis vest who thought I was landing a Boeing 747, simple.

Off to get my flight where I met the 3 Tyrone lads again. It was great to have some company considering my flight was delayed by nearly 2 hrs. On my arrival to Ireland it was raining and the rest is history.



The infamous voucher and some of the loot.

Conclusion

- The swim was a one lap swim in the canal. Little or no current and very warm, 24.4degrees.
- T1 & T2 were flooded With helpful volunteers leading to fast transitions.
- The bike was a 2 lap course on good surface but very open to cross and headwinds. Elevation of 1460m.
- The run was flattish but for a short incline near the start and another at 31-35k, total of 133m of elevation. The majority was flat and fast.
- The highlight was Solarberg Hill and the finish area.
- The support on course was also brilliant.
- The loot consisted of a Tec T-shirt, medal, small foam roller, rucksack, night mask, Garmin head band and other little bits and pieces of samples.
- I cannot recommend this race enough. Yes it is a bit of a logistical nightmare but it does all come together. I flew early Friday but could have covered everything by flying early Saturday.

Finally I would like to apologies for the length of this report but I wanted to give anyone who is considering their first long distance race some insight into what is involved in the run up to the day itself so felt it necessary to start at the beginning.