

Ironman 70.3 Mallorca Race Report by Darragh Rigney

Background

On Saturday 16th of October at 7:45AM in Port d' Alcudia, both Ironman Full and 70.3 Mallorca kicked off with the pro men's field entering the water first, followed by the female pros and age groupers. There were approximately 4000 entrants across both events which made for a great atmosphere on the day.

Alcudia is approximately 40mins drive from Palma airport. It's a beautiful town with plenty of reasonably priced hotels and restaurants. A white sandy beach lines the town with crystal clear water. The island of Mallorca is a cyclist's paradise, with more bikes on the roads than cars, smooth roads and ideal weather.

We arrived in Mallorca on the Tuesday before the race. We got a taxi from Palma airport straight to our hotel (Hotel Ivory Playa) which was just under 3km from the transition area and the centre of Alcudia town. I used a company called TRI Bike Transport to bring my bike over to the race. I dropped the bike to them in Lucan the previous week and was able to collect it at the race venue on the Thursday before the race.

I unfortunately developed a mild head cold on the Wednesday so training and prep for the race was kept to a minimum.

I collected my race pack and completed registration on the Thursday before the race. Because of Covid, every athlete had to select an individual time to complete this which meant there was no queuing on the day, and I was in and out within 5 minutes. On Friday, I had selected an afternoon slot to check in my bike and transition bags which allowed me time that morning to cycle the first 20km of the bike course and ensure there were no last-minute issues with the bike. It also gave me a feel for the start of the bike course and what was to come the next day.

The Course

The swim was an out and back loop in Alcudia bay. The water was clear, calm and 21°C. It was a rolling start with the athletes doing the full Ironman going first. There were 11 start boxes which each athlete had to place themselves in to prior to the race start based on estimated time to complete the swim.

The bike course was 90km. The first 20km leaving Alcudia was flat however from 20km to 35km it was a constant climb with an average gradient of 4%. From the top of the climb, there was a 7km downhill section with hairpin bends. We were warned several times to be extra careful here. The remaining bike course was mostly flat with one or two short sharp climbs. The course was closed to traffic, very well marked and marshalled. There were three aid stations throughout the bike course at 15km, 50km and 71km.

The Run Course was 2 loops of 10.5km which took us out along the bay and through the town itself. There were aid stations at approximately every 3kms.

The Race

I woke early on race day at 5:00AM, had my breakfast, checked my gear one last time and then got a taxi to the transition area where I did final checks on my bike and gear set up. I then headed to the beach about 45mins before my start time. It was a sunrise start and the water was very calm. AC/DC

blaring over the speakers. Everybody seemed to be buzzing, except myself, who admittedly didn't know what to expect as it was my first ever middle-distance race and training for this had been very limited.

I anticipated a 45mins swim, so I positioned myself in the 45min swim box. The swim wasn't too bad in the end and I couldn't have asked for better swim conditions. After the first couple hundred meters, I began to tire a little too quick and the turnaround point seemed miles away. I kept plugging away and eventually made it to the turnaround which took me just over 25mins. From there, the way back seemed much easier with the tide being in my favour. I was out of the swim in exactly 45mins. I walked the transition and took my time here. Overall, I hadn't set any time goals, I just wanted to complete the race and enjoy the day.

Out on to the bike course and I decided to stay within a group for the first 20km. The pace was very comfortable, no stress and just tipping along. That changed once we got to the start of the climb. 15km's of non-stop climbing gaining approx. 700m of elevation. I found this quiet challenging. Heart rate was through the roof and I must have been overtaken by what felt like the whole field! The climb took just under one hour and from there I enjoyed the descent through the hair pin turns. I didn't go too hard here as I wanted to take in as much of the course as possible, which was stunning. Once I got off the mountain part and back onto the flats, I decided to throw caution to the wind and started pushing harder on the bike, which in hindsight wasn't very sensible, as with about 5kms left on the bike course, my legs started cramping.



I struggled back to transition and again took my time getting the running gear on before heading out onto the running course. I knew I was going to have no choice but to walk part of this as I simply wasn't fit enough. The first 3km's to the first aid station felt like a half marathon in itself! The weather was now in the mid-20s, and I was struggling big time. I started to jog/walk every couple of km's for lap 1 and then for lap 2, I walked more than I jogged as my legs and arms at this point were cramping big time.

Coming to the end of the run with about a km to go, I wanted to run but I got to within 100 meters of the finishing shoot and just like that, my legs completely cramped up. I stopped around the corner from the finishing shoot for a quick stretch before jogging (limping!) over the finish line.

Altogether it took me 7hrs and 1 min. Swim 45mins, Bike 3hrs 30mins and Run 2hrs 30mins

Apart from the struggles, I really enjoyed this race. The area, and in particular the bike course, is stunning. I'd highly recommend this race to anyone considering it.

Darragh Rigney