

LOUGHREA TRIATHLON FESTIVAL

Try-a-Tri Race Report

By Mark Pierce

Sunday August 1st saw Predator Triathlon Club host its Triathlon festival located at Long Point, Loughrea Lake. The lake itself has a Blue Flag Award and crystal clear waters. On the morning of the event the weather gods didn't seem happy with heavy rain falling but thankfully they must have been appeased as the day dried up with nice racing conditions taking hold. Due to covid restrictions this year's event was a reduced schedule but still a great day of racing took place, which saw the National Youth Series along with a Senior Sprint and Try-A-Tri races.

Trilogy had one member taking part in the event, me, in the Try-A-Tri, my first Triathlon Ireland race. The course featured a 300 meter swim, an 11km cycle and a 3km run, with entries divided into 3 waves. Again with covid restrictions the transition area had some changes to normal. Each participant was allotted their place which was 2.3msq and once you entered transition the competitors were asked to not walk around but to remain in their allotted area with masks on until the race began.

The swim was lovely, with the clear waters and a nice temperature. For those new to swimming in open water this was a comforting swim as it was shallow. Once the race began, at the turn-buoy I was feeling confident for the first time, after a quick look around and saw I was in second place with a gap to the group.

T1 went to plan and I even managed a flying mount onto the bike. I wouldn't call it a quick mount but I managed not to stop the bike. The cycle route was very well marshalled and clearly marked. The marshals were great, giving words of encouragement, throughout the race. The bike course, while not technical, was a challenge due to the first 6km being uphill. While not like a cycle up Coolbanagher, it was a gentle uphill however, when the gradient kicked in there were short steep climbs. The plus side of this course was the return 5km which was mostly downhill. Good for recovery for the run course.

Again T2 went as best as could be hoped for. After being passed on the bike and slipping into 3rd place I managed to exit T2 back in 2nd place. The run course was flat except for a short

uphill of about 100m, 1km into the run. The course itself would be ideal for anybody taking their first steps into triathlon. Around the 1km marker I was once again passed but felt strong and kept within about 10m to 2nd place. With 1km left and the short downwards slope approaching the person in 2nd place seeming to begin to suffer I felt this was my time to give it my all. Unfortunately, as I kicked on both my calves cramped. The choice to make now was to keep jogging or walk. I refused to walk and managed to maintain my 3rd place.



At the finish line there were two overpowering emotions. Joy at finishing my first competitive race and surprise at how well I had done. Starting out I had set myself two goals, and they were to finish the race and beat a time of 1hour. To manage it in 48 minutes was a total shock, I still can't believe I placed 3rd overall.

This was my first race outside of club events and I must say a big thank you to so many club members for their support and advice in the lead up to the race. Before the race I was quite nervous but kept reminding myself of what I had been told, "No course will be as tough as the Castletown Tri course."

Reflections of the race are positive. It has given me confidence for future events and pinpointed areas which need work. Positives include getting stronger in the swim and good transition times. Areas that need improvement are hill climbing on the bike and better warm-up and stretching before a race.

Going forward goal setting is a must, for this year I want to do the Try-A-Tri in Athy, and next year I'd like to do a Sprint distance and then finish the summer off with a Standard distance race.

For anybody who wants to do a triathlon the best advice I can give is to take part in as many club training races as possible. The events are well designed to push you to your limit which gives you the best chance in any event.

The next tip is to listen to the advice of the club members. They have a vast amount of experience and knowledge, a great resource. Final tip would be when entering transition and setting up try not to look around too much at the kit you see around you. I made this mistake and saw some serious equipment around. This was intimidating but remember it's not the tools that make the difference, it's the workman using the tools.

