

Tri-Athy Race Report

I was using the Tri-Athy double as a training day for my big race this year; the Roth Iron distance challenge in Germany on the 10th of July. Despite some welcome distractions I have managed to string together a few training sessions this year, albeit at some antisocial hours of the day and was looking forward to my first race this season. The glorious day on the Friday before put me in a good mood and I was feeling I might have a chance of a top ten finish if all went well. But my confidence was shaken at about four that morning when some possibly out-of-date sausages that were hiding at the back of my mother-in-law's fridge began to wreak havoc on my alimentary canal.

As I drove to Athy I felt my chances of actually starting were slim. I inflated my tyres in the car park but was just going through the motions not really believing I was going to start. When the valve broke off my brand new freshly glued deep carbon wheel releasing all the air, I was delighted the final decision not to race seemed to be taken out of my hands. Unfortunately, with the help of the mechanic at transition we managed to get air in the tyre and my bluff was called.

The interminable wait in the water at the start did nothing to fire up my enthusiasm. After being swum over by almost everybody at the start of the swim and watching them then disappear into the distance, I came the closest I have ever come to standing up and getting out. But I sauntered on. By halfway around my mood had lifted. The sausages had moved on, the water was warm and I began to pick off a few stragglers. I finished the swim feeling good, even managing to exchange some friendly banter with family and acquaintances on the riverbank.

The gentle breeze out of town was pushing me along at 50km an hour on the bike (it somehow managed to change into a stiff gale on both laps every time I turned back to town). Heading towards the first turnaround I met the leaders coming the other way. Although well behind on time after the swim I was pleasantly surprised to see there weren't too many people ahead of me at this stage. I think I must have been about fifteenth out of the water. However I was over fifteen minutes behind the top swimmer who posted the remarkable time of 42mins for the three kilometres.

Over the course of the 80km cycle I managed to make some inroads into the field and finished the bike in third place. By now the sun was out and a rather hot lumpy grassy 20km run lay ahead. This is where wearing a recognisable kit really helps. The support from fellow club mates and total strangers who might have some tentative connection with Wexford really does lift the spirits and consequently the feet. By the start of lap two someone told me I was in fourth place and nine minutes behind the leader. I was delighted with myself and took my one and only energy gel in order to steel myself to defend this position. At the last turnaround point I could see I was closing in on second and third. I overtook Brian Campbell who appeared to be injured and soon after also the second place runner. With the extra traffic from the Olympic Distance runners now on the course I couldn't see the leader ahead. On finishing I was very surprised to hear he had just crossed the line 30 seconds ahead of me. My run and bike splits were among the fastest on the day which is not only very pleasing but it helps to justify the expense of my new wheel to Eimear!

Having never finished on the podium before I was delighted with second. Not winning didn't matter at the time but now looking back I can't help thinking of what might have been if I had only known how close I was. I may never get so near to winning one of these things again but the fun is always in the trying.

Thanks for the support and it was great to see so many club members flying the Wexford Triathlon Club flag with distinction.