

# ITU Triathlon World Championship Series in Sydney

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Hi Everyone,

Below is my story re: the ITU Triathlon World Championship Series in Sydney on 14th April: - (sorry - no photos as I forgot my camera!!)

I would like to share a brief account of my amazing experience at the ITU Triathlon World Championship Series in Sydney on 14th April where I was lucky enough to be a volunteer. I was positioned at the finish line at Hyde Park for the female elite athletes and it was my job (along with 5 others) to offer drinks of water and Gatorade to the elite competitors as they crossed the line. I was wrapped!!

I arrived at the volunteer meeting point at 6am where we had a pre race meeting and received our t-shirts, snack packs and water. As the female competitors weren't due to cross the finish line for a couple of hours I wandered down to the start line at the Opera House to watch the swim and 1st transition. I got there just in time to see them getting out of the water at the half way point, running about 20 metres before diving in for the second lap. The first competitor to finish the swim was Mariko Adachi from Japan in a time of 19 mins and 7 secs - amazing!! I would later learn that she had finished in 9th position overall which was a fantastic effort considering she finished the bike leg in 53rd place. At the first transition they made the wetsuit removal look so simple - most taking less than 20 seconds! I have never worn a wetsuit in triathlon as the longest distance I have ever done is the sprint distance. However, I'm sure that the need will arise one day when I eventually do an Olympic distance race (that's if I can overcome my fear of being stuck in transition unable to remove my wetsuit!!). If it was half as easy as the elites made it look perhaps I have nothing to worry about! As the women jumped on their bikes and headed up Macquarie Street I followed them to take my position at the finish line. The group of lead riders was very close and I wondered if any of them would receive a penalty for drafting - I would later learn that the drafting rule is not applicable in these events.

At the finish line the volunteer coordinator Chris advised that my assistance was required at the final drink station to assist in handing out drinks (as the lead girls were a large group of 30-40). The volunteers lined up in two rows of 20 people - the front row holding a drink in each hand ready for the athletes to come running past and back row ready to pass more bottles of water to the front row. Well I was in the front row and felt privileged to be able to handing these awesome athletes some much needed refreshment. A couple of us ended up drenched with drink bottles spilled all over the ground but it was a beautiful sunny day so no-one complained. The joy of having these awesome athletes reaching for water from our hands made up for our wet pants!!

Once they had passed us for the final time (there was four 2.5km run laps) I went to the finish line and witnessed the most amazing sight in my life! The elites had absolutely nothing left in the tank as they crossed the line and many of them were in a really bad state. We weren't allowed to crack the tops of their drink bottles as they would be taken for drug testing immediately after the event so I watched them struggle to crack the seal with shaking hands. Many of them collapsed into the arms of the medics and were taken off in wheelchairs and put on a drip to recover. They had pushed themselves to the brink knowing that medical assistance would be close at hand at the finish....I had never seen anything like it before in my life (they don't show you these bits on television!). I guess what they say is true "pain is temporary.....glory is forever!".

In first place was Erin Densham (AUS), second place Helen Jenkins (GBR) and Andrew Hewitt (NZL) third. I was so proud to witness Australia finish first and I never tire of hearing our anthem being played to celebrate sporting success. I spent the rest of the day, wandering around the event expo and soaking in the fantastic atmosphere. To be part of such a magnificent event was truly inspirational and will be something I will never forget. I'll definitely be back in 2013!!

**Jeanette Annett**