

Kona Ironman World Championships 2012 - Brendan Brooks

If you told me this time last Year I was going to race the Kona Ironman I would have laughed at you. Mid last year I was in Belgium on a 3 month stint racing bikes for a Flemish amateur club Flanders. I came back to Australia in July and raced the Tour of Gippsland with my Australian based team Jayco-2XU. On the final stage I felt my knee cave in on me and following some scans I was diagnosed with a stress fracture in my patella. 3 months off the bike was going to send me crazy so I started swimming. A few weeks later I discovered I could run, which unexpectedly didn't hurt my knee. One thing led to another and after a few beers one afternoon a mate convinced me into entering Ironman Melbourne in March 2012.

6 Months later I was crossing the finish line in Melbourne. I had no idea of my sporting plans after that race, so when I was told I qualified for the Hawaii Ironman World Championships in my 25-29 year age group I thought...why not!

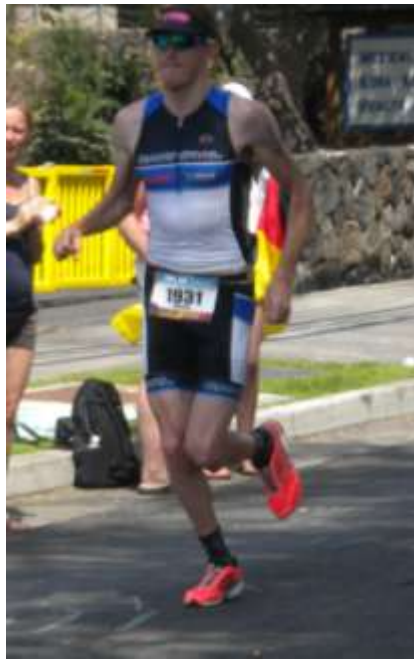
From what I had heard, the Ironman in Kona is notoriously hot, windy and raced through Lava fields (whatever that meant). Nothing anyone could have told me could have prepared me for what I experienced on race day.

A red head racing Hawaii is like throwing a marshmallow into a bon fire!

The swim is a mass start non wetsuit out and back swim, fairly straight forward. I felt good, exiting the water with a large group just under the hour mark. I jumped onto the bike and prepared myself for 5 hours of pedalling. It was windy, very windy. I thought to myself "that's Ok, this should just mean we will have a tail wind the whole way home" ...I was wrong. The back end of the bike saw the large groups from early on disintegrated. I was trying to fight off cramps with salt tablets and fluid but knew I was in trouble. I rolled into T2 just after 6 hours of racing, lathered up with some more sunscreen and began my marathon. 500m later my stomach locked up, 5km's later I was walking. My stomach cramps weren't releasing and I was cooking (literally). This was the moment I went from racing to surviving. After a 2km of walking and some calculations of how long it takes to walk a marathon I started jogging. The feed stations are set out every mile so one by one, I started to make some inroads into my marathon. As I came back into town after the first 16km section, I was lucky enough to witness Pete Jacobs, in his final stages of the race, celebrating the victory. The crowds were going crazy and in my depleted state this was enough to give me goose bumps. I still had the hardest part of the race to come, the out and back journey to the energy lab, through the lava fields, with no shade, on a highway, in the middle of nowhere...brilliant.

After seeing Jacobs look fresh as a daisy, I watched the faces and body language of every other pro as they were returning from the energy lab. Every single one of them looked like death! This gave me a little comfort in knowing the best Ironman athletes in the world were actually human. The last part of my marathon was a bit of a blur, I was walking every feed station but got to the stage where I didn't have the slightest interest in any of the fluid, food or ice they had on offer. I just wanted to make the finish line! 10hours 28minutes after the starting gun went off I finished the race. I was the happiest man on earth to actually be at the finish!

Hawaii is not a normal Ironman, it's Hawaii! I have so much more respect for the race, the sport and the athletes after that experience. I am so happy to have ticked that one off the bucket list! A big thanks goes to Jase from Endura for helping me out with my nutrition and Marcus from TriEdge for helping me out with some motor pacing and training ideas. See you all at Twinnies on Saturday!



SEE HERE FOR BRENDANS SPLITS

<http://www.ironman.com/triathlon/events/ironman/world-championship/results.aspx#axzz2BZKa5br3>