

My 2012 race report by Mark Whiticker,



Its Thursday May 3rd, I've packed the car, double checked then triple checked I have everything I need for My Ironman race.

This year just my wife Michelle and I travel down we have escaped with no kids,

(The kids are so happy no more sitting in the gutter for 13 hours).

While driving down I am getting into race mode, I am thinking to myself these next 2 days are going to be great, after a good 16 week lead up, I can have two days of rest, just doing as little as possible, I self talk you've done the hard yards now its time for the reward. The race.

This being my 5th ironman race, I sort of knew my programme off by heart, basically it is just, to be consistent with all your training, slowly building up the distance each week, making sure you eat right, train right and try not to get into to much trouble with the wife.

I would swim 3 times a week ranging from 2 to 4km's,

I rode 4 times a week, I rode a lot of 100 km's, few 120's and 150's and one 180 a few weeks out so I knew I had done the work.

I did a lot of treadmill running, mostly just 10 km runs and a few 15km.

Road running I had done three 20km runs hopping to build up, but because of my lack of stretching I strained an I.T. band/ hip flexor 5 weeks out and did not run again until race day.

Brick workouts, getting off the bike and only running 6 km's, just to get that transition muscle memory.

6 hours later we roll into Port Macquarie, the buzz had started.

Friday

We wake to a very fresh day with strong southerly. I go down to the swim start, half the competitors are their testing their wetsuits. I swim a leisurely 1.5 km, the wet suit feels good, and that's checked off.

A bit later I roll out on the bike to test it, I travel out on the start of the course over 15 km's of hills, at one section I am travelling down a steep hill at 60 kph towards the beachfront and get hit by a strong headwind which cuts me back to 25kph, I preparing for this on race day.

When we register we had to sign the official start board just like the pro peloton.

Friday evening is the official carbo banquet/ welcome function/ compulsory race de-brief. The M.C. guides us through the night, from all 476 first timers getting a standing ovation. To a guy who has done every 26 races and then another who is doing his 21st Port/Foster but his 69th all up.

Usually they organise an inspiring or motivational speaker, but this year we heard Daniel McPherson (aussie Actor/ Ironman) talk on how triathlon somehow lead him into acting. He seems a good bloke.

Saturday is rest day for me, Some competitors are out running/ cycling, but today is all about hydrating, sorting out all your gear bags (swim to bike and bike to run bag) as well as you gels and bars you will need.

In the afternoon you check your bike in, it is all in age groups and alphabetical order, if you want to see a lot of bling bikes to droll over you have to see an Ironman bike transition!

Sunday

Race Day we wake up to a glorious day, thou it is still dark in the transition there is not a cloud in the sky and not a breath of wind. It should be a great day for a swim, a ride and a run.

You can feel the buzz all around you, people checking their bikes, the occasional tyre exploding and everyone thinking thank god that's not me. Everyone wishing each other good luck, the announcers trying to get everyone out and the anxious wait in the queue for the loo.

We all get into our wetsuit's, hand in your street clothes and make your way to the swim start line.

At this stage the sun is just rising, and I manage to find the wife and Steve West for quick chat and we catch up with some of the other guys who race up here at twin towns, Joe Kelly, Even Stray, Chris Van hoof, Pat Hay, Shane Smith.

We all feed through the boat ramp and jockey for a good start position, 1500 competitors between 100m start line gets crowded.

We hear the Australian anthem get played, and I am thinking how good is this the suns just rose, there's mist on the water, the river banks are packed, and then we hear the huge bang from the starters old style Military canon.

Where off!! How do I explain it, If you think the first 100m of Noosa is hectic, well it is like that for the whole 3.8 km's.

I exit the water thinking that went okay, I look up at the clock exactly 1 hour 12 sec, spot on time. It is about 100m run to transition I am concentrating getting my suite off and what order to get dressed into my bike gear. I see Steve west and think how much he would love to be doing this. I grab my numbered gear bag and run into the change tent empty the contents on the ground, the volunteer helpers are great, one rushes over and helps and I am out within 2 minutes, Run around and pickup the bike, exit

and commence riding with a big cheer from the wife and crowd, I have exited in 199th position this is going well.

The start of the bike course is similar to riding straight up Fraser Drive then a very undulating road for the first 10 km's so your heart rate is very high. You don't have much time to site see but it is a very beautiful Coastline.

Where heading south and we can finally get down on the aero bars, I am expecting a head wind but to my pleasant surprise we have a slight tail wind.

The heart rate comes down a bit and I get into a nice rhythm maintaining a pace of 34 – 35 kph , I have learnt not to worry about people who overtake you, There just a faster rider, or you will catch them later, just stick to your plan.

There is an aid station every 20 km's to restock drinks, food, gels and bars. It is a really good reminder keep eating, keep drinking it's a long day.

The ride is 45 km's out and back twice, you can not draft the officials are very strict maintaining the 12 metre draught zone, and they buzz around the course like an annoying mozzie. On the first lap return you get buzz by seeing how many people you are in front of. I am feeling good and sticking to my plan, I come back into town, spot the wife, give the thumbs up, first lap finished 2 hrs. 40 min average pace of 34-35 kph

Up the hills and head south again overtaking a few people and getting overtaken eating, drinking, just checking the heart rate, checking cadence, enjoying it.

At approximately 120 k mark I hit a pothole and my back tyre comes off the rim and I am thinking there is a Shimano tent up the road ill stop there. But a K later my front tyre goes down, I stop change it, ride to the aid tent we think we repair the back tyre, start then a K later it goes down, so I change that, 40 km's to go with no spare, I say my prayers, A bit of head wind comes up and my pace drops back to 31 kph, I don't panic, I've had a rest I am overtaking a few people just finish.

I come back into town and Michelle knew something had happened I was about 25 mins behind schedule but I finished in 5 hrs. 53 min a PB by 7 mins.

I change into my run gear and commence, it consists of 4 x 10.5 km laps mostly flat with one short sharp hill at the 9 km point of each lap.

The weather is perfect, My first goal was to run the first lap without stopping which I did at 5 min k pace making sure I drank and or ate at every aid station.

The second lap I just thought keep going and see what happens, I completed it with a pace 6.5 min k's. The best thing about the 4 laps you get see everyone out there, the pro's, your age groupers, all the twinies guys, but best of all you pass your supporters and the very vocal crowd in the town green and along the break wall and back down the main street, this really keeps you motivated.

Lap three same again just keep plugging away, at this stage I started to get very sick of the sweet Gatorade taste, so I switched to Vegemite and water with occasional gel, I had slowed to 7 min k's but I knew just keep going, the quicker you shuffle the quicker you finish. I had to walk up that short hill but I felt that's great only one more time to go.

I knew if I maintained a my pace I would finish to a PB , I picked the pace up but I walked through the aid station's , coming back along the break wall the last time the sun was going down very quickly just when I got to that hill again with 1.5 km's go the officials came out and we had to put on glow sticks. I came back into town and Michelle gave me the GO-Pro camera and I filmed the last 600m.

It such a nice relief when you approach the finish chute because this is where you either veer left for another lap or right up the 100m finish chute which is totally packed with screaming people the announcer stating YOU ARE AN IRONMAN. I managed to spot Michelle I regret now but I should have stopped and thank her for all the support, but I finished with big smile on my face a new PB by 15 mins 11 hrs 5 mins.

As you cross the finish line they have catches who give you your medal and rape a towel over you and shuffle you off to the medical tent but I was feeling fine and spotted Michelle in the crowd and got give her a hug and thank her.

You go in and they give a massage then a feed of pasta / rice / ice cream. You collect your street clothes keep warm and walk out to meet your supporters.

I collect my bike and gear bags and shuffle home to a nice hot bath, and then go back out to watch other finishers but I got to cold so went home for a nice sleep.



Monday, the coffee shops are full with a lot of people wearing compression gear having post mortems. There three big things on today no four things, first is finisher's gear for sale second is the Kona roll down, we had our fingers and toes crossed for Pat Hay our guy from Kingscliff who came third in his age group but unfortunately the first two guys took there spot, third in the afternoon they have the undie run, You have to run 400m scull a can of beer 4 times each. These guys and one girl are crazy.

Presentation night commences from 5.30pm in a huge Marquee with food and drink, all the place getters are handed trophies, speeches are said

and they finish up with a big disco party.

Another year over, will I do it again only time will tell.....

Mark Whiticker



Cheaper than a tattoo!







Does this look like I want to do another one ????



Even Stray



Pat Hay

Shane Smith



Mark Whiticker



Joe Kelly



Chris Van-Hoof