

HardTales in the Wild

Busselton Ironman - December 2004

This race report has been a long time coming. Let me explain: I am a pragmatist in all I do and so my view on triathlon has always been that you will go as well as you have prepared – so there is little to report on. That's why I do triathlon, it sits so well with an obsessive compulsive nature and even better that we can analyse the whole thing afterwards! So I will try to not get too numeric on the race and let you have some of the insights I gained through the day.

Preparation

It would be hard to say at which stage one ever starts preparing for a specific race, as what we do is always based on what we have done before. So I would limit my preparation talk to the 12 weeks immediately before the Busso event. It was a solid 12 weeks and I have been fortunate enough to not be sick during this period. This meant uninterrupted training and sticking to scheduled rest weeks. In all I am probably from the Low Volume School as I have not done one week of more than 14hours of training. Observation 1: Mega distance is not the only approach to an Ironman and there is sufficient scope for a consistent approach that works on the cumulative time spent training

So we all know that when race day looms big on the horizon and you are starting to cut back and rest, you are confronted with all sorts of questions relating to adequacy, preparedness and general ability to deliver the goods. This was no different for me as the last weeks were speeding by. Thank goodness race day arrived just before I decided to just not do it at all. Of course, looking back and talking to others, you laugh at it all and realise that most other triathletes go through the same emotions. Observation 2: Healthy self-doubt is part and parcel of the build up to Ironman.

I have to say that the 12 weeks of Busso training was probably the most enjoyable training I have done in a long time: Fantastic rides with the NSTC crowd over the weekends, the Wednesday morning rides with Benjo et al. Sensational Lunch Time runs with the lads at AMP and the absolute bliss of belonging to the newly founded No Swim, Swim School which meant I rarely had to stick my head in chlorinated water! I maintain that Ironman is in fact a Duathlon, started by a swim – but I digress. Observation 3: Training Buddies and family support is key to get you to the line.

The Plan

(OK! – now you will get some numbers)

It is my opinion that a race of this length cannot be done without a decent plan. My plan was based on the heart rate graphs of some of my key sessions in the preceding 12 weeks and also in large on the “session” I did at the Forster Half Ironman. The big picture was to come in somewhere between 9h30 and 10hours. This I broke down into a swim of 1h10 to 1h15, a bike of 5h10 to 5h25 and a run of 3h10 to 3h20. I knew that I could do the bike times with an average HR of 133-137 BPM and the run with an average HR of 138-145 BPM.....

Race Day

I want to state this very categorically: the Busselton race brochures are misleading and deceptive. I am happy to be proved wrong but for the life of me never saw the calm clear turquoise waters portrayed in the brochure! Be that as it may, the race got off to an ok start and, on a good day that will be a very pleasant swim. It was great to do a triathlon swim in clean water and not the murky stuff that we get dished up at the likes of Forster.

So, being of the No Swim, swim school, I am realistic in my expectations and started the swim with a blue cap and well back in the field. The race started with the normal washing machine madness and I managed to stay out of trouble, kept my swim goggles on my face and, except for some wetsuit chafing at the back of my neck, survived the swim quite nicely. Observation 4: Starting the swim at your own pace and staying away from other swimmers are key ingredients of a good IM day.

The bike is flat, and I mean flat. Hope you got it: The bike is flat, as like in less than 100m elevation in 180km!! So everybody cycled fast, not! The old Freo doctor wandered south for the day and gave all those unfortunate creatures, out on the road after 11:30am, a good old run for their money. This slowed things down a bit at the back end.

The bike course was over three 60km laps and I planned to do my laps at an even pace and checked my splits very carefully as I went round. In the end I came in right on time on all 3 laps and I was happy to get off in reasonable good shape and feeling good for the run. Whilst out on the bike I also saw Simo, Jimmy, Pete, Paul, Craig and Mark and it was great to see everyone having a good old time of it. Observation 5: Plan your Race and Race your Plan.

And herein lies the story: I literally hammered the first half marathon! (Avg HR 149) So hard that I got hammered! Patience has never been one of my virtues and on this day I paid for it. Between 21km and 28km I had to dig really deep, concentrate on eating and drinking loads and not falling asleep as is my habit (For this section my HR dropped to 132 BPM). I somehow pulled through this phase and managed a shuffle to the end. I never walked but never really ran again and, shuffling into the final home stretch, I was actually starting to cramp a little. Observation 6: A Marathon is a 30km run followed by a 12km race, and this is espe-

cially true in IM.

Observation 7: Plan your race and stick to the %&*@ plan!!!

I did not walk the last 100m on the blue carpet to soak it in, No, I ran to get it over and done with.

Post Mortem

The Busselton venue is fantastic and with weather variances will enable those who return to have vastly different but enjoyable experiences. On top of that I can comment that the IM franchise is a well-oiled machine that turns out hamburgers of consistently good quality – there are no surprises in the race organisation and with time the organisers and volunteers will do an even greater job.

So how did I go against Plan? Swim = beautiful and very happy with the result. Bike = Good result both in terms of the time it took me (5:13.08) and maintaining an average HR of 134 BPM. Run: First 21km at an avg HR of 148 (1:33.51) = stupidity, Second half at an avg HR of 139 BPM (1:51.56) = survival. Recovery was ok and running 5mins slower than my worst-case scenario sort of makes the point about sticking to a plan, eh! I was lucky to save the day at sub 10hours!

It was fantastic to loop around on the bike and run and to be able to see my training buddies out there. It was encouraging to see familiar faces with whom you have shared some of your training time and somehow it encouraged me to keep going. The supporters always deserve a mention as Ironman must be one of the toughest events to support. So thank you so much to my friends and family who braved the elements for many hours in order to not get a glimpse of me in the swim, get a glimpse of me racing by on a bicycle and then walking next to me as I was shuffling along. Observation 8: It is a pity there are no medals for family and supporters.

Appendix A : Training Volumes

For those mathematically inclined:

For the year from 5 January until 28 November:

Total Run Km = 1306km (27.21km per week)

Total Bike Km = 8455km (176.15km per week)

Total Swim Km = 21.1km (this is inclusive of 2 IM and 1 half IM swim, not worth an average calculation, I'd say.)

Total Time in Training = 378hours (7.88 hours per week)

For the 26 weeks from 31 May to 28 November:

Total Run Km = 680km (26.15km per week)

Total Bike Km = 5170km (198.85km per week)

Total Swim Km = 14.3km (As I said, the No Swim, Swim school)

Total Time in Training = 225hours (8.65 hours per week)

For the 12 weeks from 6 September to 28 November:

Total Run Km = 405km (33.75km per week)

Total Bike Km = 2600km (216.67km per week)

Total Swim Km = 14.3km (Now you know that I did not swim in the first 12 weeks of the last 26 weeks – doh! It was winter!)

Total Time in Training = 110hours (9.17 hours per week)

Quassy

