

Mary Collier Race Report Ballyhass Sprint Triathlon

INTRODUCTION

My name is Mary Collier and I am one of the “Mallow 10”no we were never imprisoned for anything, nor were we a dodgy group from a talent show but am one of the ten new triathletes from Mallow Tri Club who competed and completed the inaugural Ballyhass Sprint Tri on 27th September.

This is my Tri story

HOW DID YOU BECOME INVOLVED IN TRIATHLON?

To be honest I never had any intention of doing a triathlon or joining a tri club, as with everything in life it's often who you meet on your journey, and I've met some very generous encouraging folk.

That fitness journey for me started January 2013, it was time for me to ditch the cigarettes but I knew I needed another focus, so I joined Matt Casey's gym locally in Ballyclough and that October I and some friends did the Quest Killarney adventure race. We had a great day, took our time, and had the flask and sandwiches at the top of Torc mountain (not kidding) while everyone else sped around like loons timing themselves. Got some telling off from Matt about the sandwiches afterwards.

Afterwards I became more invested in exercise and have done Quest races properly/ more enthusiastically since. I also met Mary Vowles. She has without doubt been a huge influence on my fitness journey, my own personal Ms Motivator. Mile Buiochas.

I joined the cycling club, Awbeg Freewheelers in Buttevant and did Crossfit and yoga. I have cycled and done some runs but never swam and never really had the confidence. Then the Lisgriffin Possie aka Mary Vowles and Marie Whelan encouraged me to go swimming last September with Ger Vowles and the Tri club and boy was it hard.

I really had to push myself to attend each Tuesday night, I found the swimming really challenging and I would clock watch thinking ..God will it ever be 10pm. Then lockdown with no swimming and then Ballyhass lake swimming which really helped and which I enjoyed more. I'm so glad I persevered... truthfully, I'm still battling, it's a love hate thing.

WHY BALLYHASS SPRINT?

I was kinda loosely aiming to do the Tri Kingdom Come in Fenit in August but like most races it was cancelled due to Covid . Then Ger Vowles informed us that we 10 newbies would get the opportunity to do the Ballyhass Sprint and represent the club, no pressure there then! We were well tutored, Ger prepared us fantastically well and all club members gave us great encouragement

RACE MORNING

I felt excited mainly and a bit nervous....thinking I hope I won't disgrace myself and how cold will the water feel ? will I be frozen on the bike?" and counterarguing to myself to relax, I had my training done and I knew the route, so it's all good, chill a Mhaire.



I slept a bit fitfully but not too badly, bag packed, and gear all checked (again) the night before. Driving into Ballyhass lots of friendly welcoming faces, easy parking, easy to register and easy to locate my spot in transition: No 157. Met some of my fellow Mallow 10 and all seemed relaxed and in good spirits... eager to get going. Bit intimidating looking around at some participants but those around me were chatty and friendly. The sun was shining on us too.

THE RACE

After the race briefing, we went in our wave format to the swim start. This was it, just gotta do it now Mary, this is you with yourself.

Each competitor hit the water 6 seconds after the person ahead. I had an angel swimmer, Aoife from the Mallow masters who entered the lake with me and swam alongside me. I had told her that I would stop every so often to check my location, I did not want her to think I was panicking or pull me out and finish my race. Each time I popped up she just encouraged me. I did feel a wee bit of a "god help us" she needs an angel swimmer" but I knew this was safest for me and this was my race. I prepared myself to be last out of the water, I don't think I was, and it was over faster than I had anticipated but I did put effort into it and swam as hard as I could. Thanks Aoife.



Getting out of the water was great but I felt dizzy (note to self..ear plugs) but I made for transition peeling off the wetsuit enroute. When I got there, it was empty.....holy crap!! Everyone was gone. Tried to change as quickly as possible and get on the bike asap...could not believe everyone was gone! Might've used other expletives, in my head of course.

Slight wobble getting on the bike once out of transition and then pedalled fast and hard. Didn't really think about the wet tri-suit and wet bra under my jacket, just pedalled. On the other side by the entrance to Ballyhass the person behind me from the swim whizzed past me on his bike. Dig in Mary!

I thought I'll surely see someone up ahead before I hit the Killarney road but nope it wasn't until after Lombardstown cross turn I spotted other cyclists...this gave me something to catch if I could.



Pedalled on as hard as I could and also drank water as thinking now of the run ahead. On reaching transition I caught up with my training buddy Elaine and we dismounted together. Some competitors were finishing their run at this time.

I anticipated that my legs would be unhelpful at the start of the run and they did not disappoint but I was now on the home stretch and I felt good. As I was making my way out of Ballyhass other competitors were heading home but voiced their support as they passed.

That spirit of camaraderie and encouragement I felt all along the route from all the marshals, some few spectators and especially Mallow Tri Club members. Another thought in my head was from a comment in the tri booklet, run tall, you're about to complete a triathlon.

It was great to finish. I think all the "Mallow 10" showed their talents and potential. Thank you to everyone that worked so hard to make the day happen.

BEST TIPS FOR BEGINNERS (from my perspective)

Join a club, it's easier to train with others, it motivates you to attend sessions and the more experienced give great advice. It's a sociable outlet as well as a time for fitness and I think these feed into our mental wellbeing on a good few levels.

Train, don't strain and build your fitness steadily with a mixture of going at your own pace and pushing yourself, having a race to train for definitely focuses your efforts. And stay focused on your own race and your own times, don't compare yourself to others.

Be prepared to work hard and train each week, as with everything in life practice makes perfect

Personally I like training and exercise and I like that my body feels stronger. I view my exercising as part of my selfcare and I make that time for me.

