

Hardman Full Killarney 29 August 2020

Race report from Linus English

I was asked to write a report and discuss my experience in triathlon

How has triathlon changed my life?



To explain how triathlon has changed my life I have to go back a couple of years, after struggling with my weight for nearly 10 years and trying diets and other ways to lose weight I had reached my heaviest at nearly 18stone. It was April 2018. I announced to my wife “I think I want to try and do a triathlon” to which she replied, “you can’t swim, and you don’t own a bike”. So, the next day I signed up to do the Fermoy sprint triathlon which was on the following August. An Uncle of mine helped with a bike and I then got stuck into watching YouTube videos and reading everything triathlon related online. I set about learning to how to swim and how to go about training for a triathlon. I came across the Mallow Tri Club Facebook page and my wife encouraged me to join the club, it took several weeks of doubting myself before I actually joined and another few weeks before I got the nerve to join in on a club training session. Very nervous with my donated bike(to which I had only completed about 40k on so far) and only a few weeks of running done, I arrived to one of the toughest training sessions I have ever experience to this day, a hill repeat brick session of pencil hill. My nerves were soon gone by the end of the session (along with any energy I had) because I was made feel so welcome by the members and was given loads of advice on training. From that day I

progressed much faster than I expected and completed my first triathlon in Whitegate a month before completing Fermoy and was hooked from then on.

So triathlon has changed my life incredibly, I’m now the lightest I’ve been in over 12 years, I’m the fittest and the healthiest I’ve been since I was a kid, the feeling of community and comradery there is in Mallow Tri Club has really helped me feel at home in the sport that I now love.

I know that’s a bit long winded sorry, so I’ll get on with the race report:

So why the Hardman full?

Well after 2 years of triathlon where I had completed several races ranging in distances from Sprints to Olympic and even my first half Ironman in August last year, the next logical jump was into a Full distance triathlon.

In October of 2109 Donough Barrow, Stephen Jones and I decided together that we’d have a crack at Ironman cork at the end of June 2020, and when we looked at it the Hardman full fell in at the end of August, We felt we would have enough time to recover and be ready to tackle the Hardman as well. We drew up a training plan of sorts with the hope of drawing on the experience Steve had accumulated in his 3 previous Hardman Full races.

How did I feel?

I began training the first week of Dec 2019 and I found it tough trying to balance family, work and training, while still having in the back of my mind this is only the beginning, That the training load is only going to increase as the months go on and that's when doubt started to creep in. It only took a few words of encouragement from the lads and I was back at ease and the training started to feel more manageable. Then covid hit and races were being cancelled here, there and everywhere but I was still hopeful Ironman would still be going ahead. Lockdown happened and that was that, I was completely pi**ed and just stopped training.

After 3 weeks of pretty much no training and eating like the fat man of old, I got myself back into the mindset that we still have the Hardman as it was in August and months away "surly it will be all over with by then".

So jumping forward and back into full training after another few words from the lads, We decided to try fit in a half distance triathlon, Donough, Steve, Brendan Gleeson and I managed to get into the Hardman Waterville Half a few weeks before the Full. The race went great and I was feeling confident about the full now as I had managed to take 34mins off my previous half distance race. The following week all 4 of us hit the ring of Kerry for a go at the bike course as Brendan was now doing the full also, at the end of that day it left me feeling even more confident that I could actually complete this thing.

The Race Report!

I arrived down to Killarney the Friday evening before the race with my family, after checking into our accommodation I headed over to collect my race registration bag and then from there shot straight over to T1 to rack my bike and drop off my special needs bag for half way at Waterville. There was 6 of us from Mallow tri entered and spirits were high, a mix of nervous anticipation and excitement. I was delighted to be positioned beside Brendan and Steve in transition and caught up with the lads to discuss tactics and plans for the next morning and then back to the Airbnb for a pre-race dinner and hopefully some sleep, unfortunately the latter didn't really happen as I only managed 4 hours of broken sleep before getting out of bed (or off the couch) at 4.30am, a bowl of porridge and a final check of my transition box I was off to set up transition.

Swim

Wetsuit on and ready to go, we were to enter the water in 2's every 4 sec and as I entered the water paired with Brendan, Ger Vowles was Technical official on the day and gave us an extra bit encouragement as we set off. Sighting was difficult owing to the sunrise and my goggles fogging up. Still I felt strong throughout the swim although it did feel at times the buoys were going further away from me, it took me by surprise to see I had covered 4300m in a time of 1hr 34 when I left the water.



Bike

Wetsuit off, socks shoes & helmet on and away on the bike. I felt good setting off and was soon climbing out of Killarney heading for molls gap, it was a major boost seeing Ed & Heather cheering us on at Torc waterfall. I had decided the key was to be patient on the climbs and I could be fast on the descents and flat and who doesn't love going fast. I passed Tony towards lady view and he looked comfortable and smiling and also caught up to Brendan(also comfortable and smiling) near Molls gap, we had a quick moan about

our swims to each other then hit the descent at speed into Kenmare.

On to Waterville for a complete refresh of nutrition, I had decided on a mix of bars and gels washed down with 6 bottles, a mix of water and electrolytes. I also had several salt tablets which to any cramping & this worked really well on the day. The head wind from Waterville to Killorglin was tough and energy sapping and I found I struggled at times but seeing Ed again in Glenbeigh gave me a push on to Killarney. I came off the bike side by side with Brendan just as we entered the water some 7.5hrs earlier.

Run

I quickly settled into a pace I felt comfortable with and started to tick over the laps getting a major boost at the start of each lap from the amazing cheers of support from our families and the members of Mallow Tri and their families it was something to really look forward to and it made the hurt go away for at least the first half of each lap, the second half of the lap Ed or Steven Ring was there every time with a few great words of encouragement, I hit the hill on lap 6 and I myself hit the dreaded wall people talk about, I decided to walk the hill for those next 2 laps I just couldn't get myself run it, I had in my head I was going to walk it every lap from then, but as I started to walk it on lap 8 I heard from familiar voice behind me shouting to "get going" that its "only a stupid hill, the laps over at the top, come on boi" it was Steve Jones and I clung onto his heels for the next 2 laps, I had to finish my last lap alone as Steve had finished but with his words ringing in my ears I had run 2 of my quickest laps all while giving out to myself all the way up that hill. I crossed the line with tears in my eyes, I had actually done it, I'd completed the marathon in 4hrs 28mins and completed the Hardman in 12hr 1min.

Would I change anything in my preparation for the future?

As far as how I approached the race itself, I don't think I'd change anything, my nutrition worked great on the day, my bike had no issues,

As regards training I think ill work on my running for next time and build the confidence that I can keep going even if my body is trying to tell me I can't.



