

Bantry Half Hardman 8th of August 2020.

Introduction

My name is Daire O Sullivan and I am 38 years old. I was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis back in 2004 in Australia. To be honest I struggled with the diagnosis and was convinced I'd be in a wheelchair in a matter of years. I came home from Australia in 2005 after having a great year, continued going out, partying with friends and drinking a lot to block out my diagnosis.

After having three kids in 2014 I decided to do Cork City Marathon. Some people laughed at me when I said I'd do it! I did little training for it and ran it in 4 hours 18 minutes. When I met my wife at the finish line she said to me "Can you imagine your time if you actually trained!" so in 2015 I started to run with Mallow AC and in 2019 I broke the 3 hours in London marathon with a time of 2 hours 58 minutes.

How did you get involved in Triathlon

To be honest I never had any interest in triathlons. I really love running and still do, but on a July morning in 2019 I got a text from Kevin McCarthy saying (Ironman Barcelona 2019 kid). I replied, "are asking me or telling me." and he replied (telling you kid) so I said grand let's do it. I still wasn't convinced, my running was going really well with a 61-minute 10 miler in the bag, I was minute away from breaking the 60-minute mark. I was worried the Ironman training would take from my running and also the time that was involved for training. It was going to be a big commitment.

Kevin at this stage was after setting up a Whatsapp group for five of us "Barcelona 2020" so I was really under pressure at this stage. However, the decision was made easier as in August 2019 I was diagnosed with a stress fracture and was told I was not allowed run until January 2020.

This was the game changer for me as my consultant told me that I could cycle and swim as much as I wanted but no running until January 2020. The stress fracture had come from my huge improvement in running over a short period of time.

I bought a bike, a wetsuit and joined the Tri club and really started to work on my swimming. Thanks to Ger Vowles my swimming dramatically improved. Ger gave me great confidence as I never thought I would manage 100 metres not to mind 1.9km in the sea.

Why Bantry

Kevin McCarthy bought me a book for Christmas "Be Iron fit" and he said to me that we will follow the 30-week training plan in the book. Week 22 of the plan was to do a half Ironman distance and of course Bantry fitted nicely into that plan.

How did you feel

I felt very nervous about it but on the other hand I felt very lucky to be able to do a race in the current climate and be healthy enough to do. Kevin sent me on a link the day before the race of the organiser driving the run on the course. Kevin was horrified when he saw the run and I said to him it doesn't look that bad!

We got down to Bantry and decided to drive the run and leave out a couple of bottles of Lucozade sport for ourselves. To say I got a fright when we drove it is an understatement!! We got to a certain point and met two other competitors also leaving drinks out for themselves. We were chatting and I asked them what distance are we at now? He said 5 and I presumed five miles and thought it's not

too bad but soon realised we were only at the 5k point! I was sick in my stomach with the thought of running it the next day.

Race morning

I got up at 5:30am after about 3 hours sleep due to nerves and all that, had a shower and went down for breakfast at 6am. All I wanted was a big bowl of porridge and was told the chef was just in and that I'd have to wait 20 minutes for it. I was furious and beginning to feel stressed as I am a very organised person, and this was upsetting my plan by at least half an hour. Anyway, the porridge eventually came out and I had two bowls of it and then went to the room to get ready and check my bag etc for 20th time!

Kevin's wife Katie dropped us to the start line and helped us unload.

The Hardman

The race begins with a rolling start, 2 people entering the water every 4 seconds. With great encouragement from the start line I ran into the water. I was out just under 50 minutes. I ran to the bike had a chicken sandwich and half a bottle of Lucozade Sport. My transition was good, and I left the transition with one of the organisers saying that this is the easy part sitting on your arse for next 86km!

I clipped in and off I went passing people as I was going along the road feeling happy and confident. As I was finished the cycle and was running up to transition two, I saw Kevin coming against me starting his run. I remember thinking he is flying. I got into transition and saw my wife, my mother-in-law and Katie and their encouragement really boosted me on.

I poured a full bottle of water over my head as it was 25 degrees and I needed to cool down before I started this dreaded run! I just kept my head down and just kept running. I knew my run was going well because a good friend said to me before if you are passing people while you are running you are running a good race.



At the 5k point I caught up with Kevin and gave him a few words of encouragement. It was a hard run especially in that heat, luckily my bottles of Lucozade were still there along the road where I left them. As I was coming up to the finish line I was thrilled and delighted to see so much support at the finish. I had done it; I had completed a half Hardman.

Any Mistake

I struggled with my sighting in the water. I ended up doing a lot of Zig Zagging and swimming more than 2k so I think this just comes down to more practice.

Did you hit your goals?

People that know me, know I'm extremely driven and race against myself. My target was to break 6 hours and I finished it in 5 hours 48 mins. I achieved my goal and I was delighted with that time. Bigger and better to come hopefully!

Daire O Sullivan