



Sri Chinmoy Triple Triathlon Race Report

Canberra – 20 November 2011
Andrew Renwick – Solo



2007, 2009 and now 2011 are all years of the Triple-Tri according to my own personal zodiac. My plan this year was for 'simplification': minimise the number of complex races I take on, and complete them well... *The best laid schemes o' mice an' men gang aft a-gley*¹

Things got complicated, and for a while things got tough; so for 2011 I will always remember that, being challenged in life is inevitable, being defeated is optional.

I have one thousand thankyou's for my partner Julie, who's support on the day got me to the end. More importantly without her support throughout this year I would not have got to the start. Thanks also to my Mum & Dad, Stephen & Becki and Sean & Kim who all gave up their weekend to support me along the way.

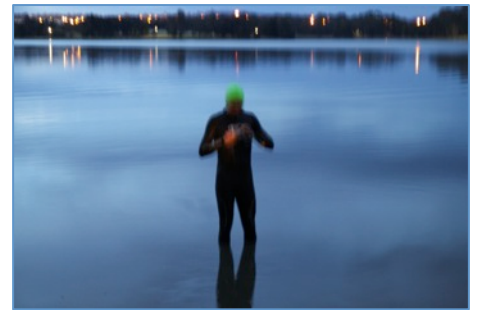
Lastly, my thanks to David Williams from Hammer Nutrition, who have supported me for the last few years and made this race possible. Following the Hammer fuelling principles I raced on a liquid only diet of Perpetuem, HEED and Endurolytes. It worked extremely well, providing what I needed, while limiting cramping and GI distress.

Race Day

After a night of broken sleep 4am came all too soon. Traditionally Triple Tri days start off cold before getting hot, 35+ degrees type hot, yet the forecast for the day was for showers and possible thunderstorms, so we left the hotel wondering what Huey would bring.

Pre-dawn on lake Gininderra was beautiful, and with 2 years of competing as a solo under my belt I could relax, and enjoy a short warm up swim on my own.

Then, a moment's silence to centre ourselves... and the 12 solo athletes for 2011 were off.

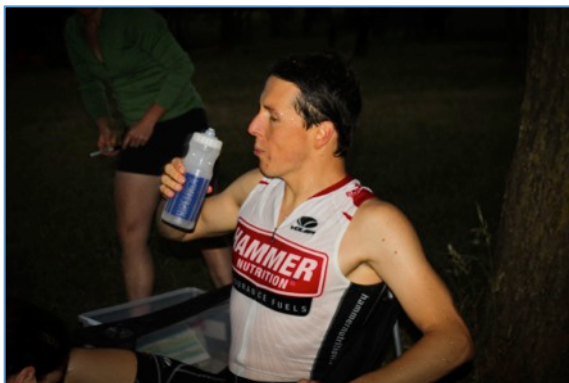


Leg 1 – 1.5km Swim

Time: 0:25:07

Overall place: 1

I've been practicing! Under tuition of my good friend Pete Jacobs, my swim form has improved dramatically. While I am not heading to the Olympics anytime soon I at least look more like a swimmer when I am in the water.



My plan: find some friendly feet and hold on.

It was not to be, looking left and right I was alone at the pointy end. In the half-light I secretly hoped I was going the right way! Rowan Beggs-French was not far behind, he upped the pace but I held him without digging too deeply too early, it will be a very long day.

I held a good pace for the duration; thinking that no matter what else happens today, first out of the water is a great place to be.

¹ often go awry

Leg 2 – 35km Mountain Bike

Time: 2:01:01

Overall place: 2

Julie and her crew provided a flawless transition and I was ready to go in no time. Rowan was not wearing a wetsuit and we left the transition together, getting to know each other and no doubt each sizing the other up.

Rowan has legs – we hit the flat bike paths and he was off, I held him for a short while before pulling back to a more sustainable pace. I entered the bush and, unfortunately for Rowan, I passed him a short while later. He had suffered a flat but his support crew were on the way!

Pushbike hill is always a highlight of this leg. It is steep, rocky and loose, plus with a little rain it gets slippery too! It definitely lived up to its name ☺

Back on the road and I missed a turn! I've raced this leg 5 times and I missed a turn! It cost me, and Rowan slipped past. I ended up a couple of minutes down at Transition.



Leg 3 – 20km Run

Time: 1:42:27

Overall place: 1



The best way to describe this leg is *three big hills and a meander along a lake*. I was feeling good, easy on the ups, pace on the flats and downs.

My target for all three runs was to hold an average pace of 5:30 per km. A tall order given the terrain and the length of the day but when I hit the flat-land I was on target for this one.

About 3kms out I came up behind Rowan, we were both a bit surprised. With a burst of speed I cleared him by a couple of minutes into TA.

Leg 4 – 3.5km Swim

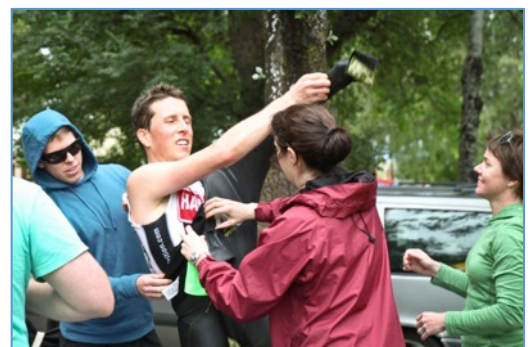
Time: 1:13:56

Overall place: 2

Rowan barely stopped in transition and so by the time I had my wetsuit and got into the water he was well ahead of me.

In 2009 this swim hurt me bad, insufficient training and a super hot day resulted in massive leg cramps. I was in better shape this year, and my Hammer Endurolytes held me in good stead. Even so I was hesitant to push and my resulting pace was fairly average. In addition, if I'm honest, my arms were fairly cooked anyway.

This was a brutal swim. The head wind caused some irritating chop, and I got to take home my own small part of lake Burley Griffin for my trouble. My longer-than-it-should-be stop at the middle aid station allowed me to take on some Perpetuem Solids and more Endurolytes. This put me in good spirits for the rest of the swim and upon reaching TA I was pleased to hear I remained in second place and that Rowan was less than 10 minutes ahead.



Leg 5 – 42km Mountain Bike

Time: 2:21:08

Overall place: 2

This leg had changed a bit in 2010, meaning there were a couple of surprises in store for me. Thankfully they made the ride slightly easier, not harder and I was feeling great.

Smooth and undulating with the mandatory steep hills thrown in for good measure, I will go as far to say that this ride was pleasant. There was rain and mud but the energy sapping heat I had been dreading stayed away. I'm not saying it was easy, and the knowledge that I was just over ½ way through the race certainly keeps things in perspective. It is a long haul leg that seems to be going up way more often than not.

Even knowing what was to come I was stoked to be out there.



Leg 6 – 12km Run

Time: 1:04:47

Overall place: 3

Here is what I wrote about this leg in 2009:

Mt Taylor. I'm not sure how to personify this mountain: either a vindictive female who likes to see you suffer or an alpha male who's out to prove who's boss. Whichever case, I was squarely beaten, spending the majority of the ascent walking without even the will to run.

This year my opinion has not changed. Uphill, straight out of transition, for a long, long time. 2009 I could not run. 2011 I did not run either, and this was exactly the way I planned it.



A couple of team runners passed me on the way up, so at the top I stopped to wee. Coming back to the track I glimpsed the back of another runner in black & white, heading down the hill. "Hopefully that was a team..."

I kept black & white in sight on the way down but he was consistently pulling away. Then, we hit the flat course towards the lake and he took off, really, really took off. "Phew, I knew it was a team, solos don't run like that at this stage of the race..."

By the time I reached transition I was hurting. Every year this is a punishing run, I was glad to be at the end.

My crew greeted me with "Hurry up, the next solo is just jumping into the water". As I turned to look I was stoked! I had again caught up to... oh... there goes black & white... Daryn, another solo, I was in third.

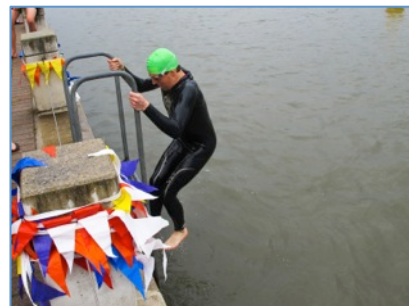
Leg 7 – 1.2km Swim

Time: 0:26:30

Leg place: 3

I'd like to say I bridged the gap, I'd even be happy to say I closed the distance. Neither would be true. My arms were shot, my form was shot, I just tried to relax and get the job done.

The cherry on the top of this swim is the ladder climb to get out of the water... you try it after 6 ½ hours of racing ☺



Leg 8 – 24km Mountain Bike

Time: 1:46:40

Leg place: 3

This leg is the shortest bike leg; it is also the steepest and the rockiest. My time in the water had settled me, legs were tired but ok, head was clear and my Perpetuem was still sitting well in my stomach; I can't ask for much more at this point.

Once you reach the hills, they are relentless. Even on the way down they are bumpy meaning no real time to recover before the next up. I was moving as fast as I could; it was not really very fast but I guess it's all relative!

Right before transition there is a pipe to ride through (see the picture at the top). I'm not a small man and I have a big bike, I struggled, my helmet and camelback took a beating. Towards the end I found my flow and then I literally got stuck! The pipe had partially filled with sand and I got wedged against the roof!



All's well that ends well, 8 down 1 to go.



Leg 9 – 13km Run

Time: 1:14:10

Overall place: ...

A quick transition, spurred on by my support crew "MOVE! He is only 10 mins ahead!"

This is no easy last leg. It goes straight up, then up again, before going down a long way. 10 minutes does not sound like much but over 13kms it was a tall ask, given how I had seen Daryn run during leg 6.

I walked the hills, all the while hoping that he was too. Every person that came up behind me "are you a team?" "Thank goodness". I could keep moving but there was no way I was going to be able to respond if a solo came surging past.

I knew that when I hit the bottom of the hill there is about 6km to go and it is mostly flat. I also knew that my support crew would be waiting to cheer me through. Before I could see them, I could hear them. They were cheering, so I knew there must be another runner ahead. As the trees cleared and I rounded the corner "It's Daryn!" I had closed the gap. My support crew went nuts. They could not believe it! I could not believe it either (to be fair to Daryn, after checking the times, the gap was no more than 5 minutes).

I ran on, 150m, 100, I'm scared. I'm already hurting, and after the last run I know Daryn has legs that I can't match if it comes to a sprint finish.

This whole day, this whole season, lead to this moment. This choice. What am I out here for? Is my fear of trying and failing too large to let me have a go? Who am I to believe in myself enough to dig a little deeper, to find what I need, and to keep it? I know who I am, and I knew what I had to do.



50m, 20, 10, "Good running Daryn", "Good running Andrew".

I did not look back, at least not for a while. I knew that my only hope was to push for the end, now with 5 ½ kms to go. I knew my only hope was to lay it on the line and hurt more than I had ever hurt before.

4:20 pace, 4:15, back to 4:20... this is ridiculous. I did not feel good. I won't lie to you. But I was moving fast.

Eventually I looked back "he hasn't responded!" but I knew he would be coming. Up the pace.

3k to go. My crew are on the side of the road "Your looking great brother!" (he was lying) "How are you feeling darling?" All I could respond with is "I'M IN THE BOX" and up the pace.



I did not slow down. 5kms of constant fear that at any moment Daryn would kick, and I would be left wanting, kept the fire burning.

I crossed the finish line in 12:15:46.

19 minutes behind Rowan and 5 minutes clear of Daryn.

2 hours faster than my finishing time in 2009.



The end of a Journey

So that's it, we train, we race, we recover and do it all again. Why? For me this sums it up nicely:

*"We're here to push beyond the boundary of what is possible.
Not find the boundary of what is not. There's a fundamental difference."*

- Molly Sheridan

