Athy Duathlon – Race 2 2017 report

The weekend saw a busy schedule of races for Athy Triathlon Club. First up was the all inclusive kids Duathlon now in its second year. The crew set up the run course around the all weather pitch in Athy College, the transition area in the outdoor gym area and the bike course in the primary school car parks. Ramps and bollards were removed. Barriers and cones were placed courtesy of Kendra Civil Engineering who were very generous with their equipment. The weather looked dodgy but the rain held off.

Kids and parents were soon descending on Athy College with no less than 6 races for children as young as 4. Bikes with stabilisers to mountain bikes and road bikes were all to be seen. My own young lad competed in race 2 and managed to crash on the first corner trying to rail his stabilisers but dusted himself off (Thanks Ducky) and finished the race with a smile on his face. 😃😃😃 A special word for Shane Kavanagh and Ryan Fox who were very strong on the bike in their race and also the girl from Racing 795 who crashed and had mechanical issues but re mounted and finished strong.

As the races finished the clean up crew got to work but the lure of the rugby seemed to dissipate the numbers and we settled for setting up the run course before heading for the hills.

Sunday saw the second of the adult races taking places with numbers slightly down largely due to the Duathlon in Tramore on Saturday and Storm Ewan's little puff of wind. An overcast sky greeted the marshals and competitors alike. Transition made for a bleak place with the wind blowing over barriers and cones and trying its best to rip the tape off the poles on the run course. The 60mm wheels may not have been the best choice but at least they looked cool! I spied 2 discs in Transition and reassured myself that I was not the only psycho there. I put the bike in the big ring and 19 on the cassette. Shoes with neoprene sleeves were attached with elastic bands and tyres were pumped. The bike was ready anyway.

Registration was quick and there was little debate in my head as to what to wear. It was warmer than the last outing but the wind meant that a wind vest would be useful on the bike. That said one guy from Edenderry just wore his Tri suit whilst many opted for wind/rain jackets. An easy run around the course was had to warm up. The wind was still howling. The Finish gantry was taken down before it blew away.

Mass start and the fleet of foot took off like banshees. Again I opted not to burn matches as I knew what was in store after the turn in Kildangan. Athy were very much in the mix at the front with Peadar Owens, Michael Browne and Conor Tiernan showing the colours. High fives with the Juniors who were very vocal with encouragement. Down the lane with Bronagh McAdams, Daithi Kidd and Kim Doyle leaving me in their dust. I hit T1 in about 20th place and after a fumble with the helmet it was time to navigate my way to the Mount line ably marshalled by Gemma. A nice clear path on the left let me mount in flying leap mode and get the toes into the shoes and not damage anything delicate. A couple of revs got me going but I could feel the elastic's and had to reach down and snap both. Out the main gate and I could feel the wind at my back. I managed to take a few places back in T1 and on the mount line.

Went down the gears and kept the cadence high until I got my breathing under control. Everyone was flying so hunting them down took longer and I gradually built speed and got down to the 12 and 11 sprockets. I did not have a speedo but I figure we were pushing 50 with the tail wind. One by one I clawed back a few spaces. I eventually caught Bronagh McAdams after Kilberry then Tony Hughes and Michael Browne and a bit of ping pong ensued. A chap from Wicklow powered by us all and clearly had plenty ofweetabix for breakfast. I could see the leaders coming the other way and Will Byrne had opened up a nice lead with Conor Tiernan not far behind.

The chap from Wicklow overshot the turn and ended up in the service station presumably to stock up on more weetabix. I made the turn in 9th and now came the fun bit. Into the wind was a different race. It felt like Eric Donovan was slapping you around the ring. No more big gears. It took me a while to find a good cadence and Tony and Michael opened up a gap on me and began disappearing up the road like a truck and trailer. Bronagh was also putting the pressure on but the wind was the real opponent. If I lived in Monasterevin I would have been tempted to turn around and go home for tea. No such luck though and it was a case of sucking it up. The 60mm front wheel was a struggle and one or two gusts nearly caught me out. That said the two lover boys up ahead were not having an easy time of it either and I could see Peadar ahead of them on the long straight at Kilberry. The two lads ahead of Peadar also seemed to be in a remarkably tight formation for a TT event. As I headed through Kilberry I felt I could manage a few more gears and the gap was coming down. The conjoined twins passed Peadar and I managed to get onto his wheel and made sure to give plenty of room as I passed him ( in the full knowledge that I would be seeing his heels on the run). I caught the wheel suckers at Bert Cross and put a bit of a gap in and managed to find another gear. But again I knew the lads would have good running legs but the game was afoot.

After what seemed like an eternity I could see the school gates and it was time to loosen the straps and nudge out the ankles. A quick swing of the right leg and the dismount line was done and dusted with eagle eye Gemma making sure I hit the ground before the line. 8th position not too shabby. Tidy transition and more high fives with the Juniors and off I went like a hare with a pack of rabid hounds (runners) not too far behind. I could see the dudes from Wicklow and Edenderry ahead and briefly entertained ideas of catching them but my legs gave me a reality check and the gap opened. Tony, Michael and Peadar hunted me down as expected and I could see Bronagh was eating into my meagre lead. Met our race leader Will Byrne at the entrance to Reeves and he had a comfortable lead over the chasers. Conor was lying fourth and I was considering my own position in 11th but held on in the end after finding a bit more in the legs.

A cup of tea never tasted as good and Maggies carrot cake completed the recovery after a hard race.

Bronagh Adams was 1st in the ladies. Kim Doyle took 2nd with Abby Whelan from our neighbours Trilogy taking 3rd. Conor was first home for Athy taking fourth, Michael Browne 7th, Peadar Owens 8th and Tony Hughes rounding out the top ten.

A big thank you to the marshals who braved the wind and kept everyone safe. Roll on the last race in the series in March. Any chance of nice weather this time? No, didn't think so.......