



TriAthy 2013 was my very first triathlon so this event holds personal significance. It fell out of favour with me a couple of years ago after some shambolic race co-ordination & very poor marshalling at key points in the race, but for 2017 it was “under new management”. To be fair, TriAthy 2017 seemed to run relatively smoothly this year so kudos to John Wallnutt for getting it back on track. So, after giving this event a miss in 2016 I was back to finish the medal set by giving the Double Olympic a bash.

This is my hometown event now (a proud Jackeen, living in Athy 10 years) so race logistics couldn't be easier. Friday evening registration in Athy College was a breeze and my traditional prerace nerve settler(s) in Andersons set me up nicely for an early night. A 5am alarm on Saturday morning suited my erratic prerace sleeping pattern & with so many ATC club mates involved, the race morning banter & tactics talk was in full flow from 6:30am in transition – It's all part of the experience. Athy Triathlon Club had of course huge numbers participating in all events from TryAthy to Double Olympic so this really was the A race for ATC this year. I don't know the final count but I'd guess we had 50+ ATC members participating on the day – Brilliant stuff.



There were about 280 starters for the Double Olympic @ 7.45am (2 self-seeded waves). With decent weather and a couple of Barrow dips done in the last few weeks the last minute nerves weren't actually too bad as I just about snuck into the back of the 1st wave. As the starter gun fired, the madness began. You'd think the Kona cannon went off. The pack speeding off actually suited me, as I stayed well back & right of them & had “clear water” (albeit murky!) ahead of me. I'm not great at the river swims so planned to adopt my tried and tested river swim strategy. I.e. head straight for the riverbank reeds going upstream, try not to swallow too much water and hit the middle of the river for the downstream “rafting”.

The 3km swim course was broken into 4 sections (900m upstream, 600m down, 600m up and 900m down to the finish). This format is actually quite a nice balance and once I made my way under the Crom-a-Boo bridge (I must find out where that name originates) which was a bit of a mosh pit the 1st 900m were tough but doable. As expected, I took a few elbows & legs. One friendly punter, doing a good impression of a Harbour seal in mating season actually tried to climb over/mount me. That lad got a swift Conor McGregor style right & left leg combination to dissuade his advances! Once the 1st 900m were done, the body and mind kind of settled down a little and I got the feeling the river battle was half won. The middle sections (down & up 600m) were less crowded and passed before I knew it. The final rafting downstream for 900m was



actually enjoyable (am I allowed say that?). I exited the water feeling quite drained from the effort but happy enough, albeit in a relatively slow time of 1hr 9mins. Not that I care too much about fast times at this stage (of the race or in life generally really!!). Notably during the swim, I saw a chap being aided by a kayak marshal at the 2k mark. Never nice to see, but it turned out it was one of our own (Peadar Owens) who had the misfortune of a debilitating cramp. He sensibly ended his race but stayed on for the whole day to support the rest of the ATC crew. Some might say that is commendable, but it doesn't surprise me in the slightest. It's just how our club operates. Peadar will be back with a vengeance no doubt.

T1 was a lonely affair as all the ATC lads, whose bikes were lined up together, were long gone. It was also a physical struggle & curse fest too. I swear my wetsuit is shrinking every year. Either that or someone put superglue on the inside of it. After some major fumbling with wetsuit, helmet & shoe straps, I was away on the bike and most definitely chasing the pack. T1 time 3mins.

The now famous TriAthy fib of "Ireland's flattest/fastest bike course" lay ahead (I do not consider 230m of elevation on the Olympic bike route (quick maths: 460m for the double Oly) to be flat or particularly conducive to fast times. However, I know the route well, given sections of it regularly appear on ATC cycle routes & I live close by. The out and back sections along the Carlow road are easy enough to negotiate but there are some technical sections and rough road surfaces when you venture off the Carlow road & those non-existent inclines have a bit of bite in them, especially on the 2nd lap.

The bike route is straight out the Carlow road for 6.5km, then a sharp left turn at the old mill & up the Beaconstown road, turning right at Kilkea (11km) and on to the turnaround at Castledermot (15km). Heading back to the Carlow road (via a sharp left at Sils Cross) and out to another turnaround at Maganey (30km) before a fast straight 10k return to Athy to complete 40km. Bless yourself and do it all again.

I planned to approach this section of the race just like the Dublin Half IM last year, by taking it handy-ish, keeping the HR in the correct (low) zone & getting some nutrition & water on board. That turned out to be more difficult than expected. The HR was way up right from the start and I struggled to get it down. My HR average for the bike was more like my threshold HR for a long run which I knew would come back to bite me but it was tough to reign in the effort, with so many flying past me. It was definitely an eye opener on the bike in terms of my lack of fitness but despite the required effort/hardship I did enjoy it. The bike route was splattered with blue and white tri tops too and I spend most of my time cycling one handed while waving



and pointing at fellow ATC club mates! I got into this triathlon malarkey for a few reasons but one of them was definitely the buzz of being part of a club. There is a great feeling of comradery seeing/acknowledging fellow club mates on the course. They all looked much stronger than me on the bike. We've some crew of athletes in ATC now (not just our star Niall Foley who took the time to offer some encouragement as he whizzed past me on his way to a 2nd place finish in the Sprint event). The most memorable parts of the day for me arrived at 32km & 42km, when I caught sight of the other McEntee ATC Jersey zipping by me, more on that later. Thankfully no major mishaps on the bike and I was back in Athy after 2hrs 41mins. No fancy one legged pedal gliding or pre dismount unclipping of shoes for me. Stop, unclip and tip toe to my allotted T2 space to prep for the run. T2 time 2mins.

So after just shy of 4hrs, all that remained was 4 laps of the 5k course. I like this lap set up. It allows you to break the run down into mentally manageable sections and feed off the crowd support on each lap, which was really brilliant on the day. Overall it's an OK route. There's a slight climb to the 2k mark out past Coneyboro to the red herring turn off for the river. Whoever decided to put that sneaky down/up section on the route deserves a good slap btw. The section from the Carlow road down to the riverbank is more akin to a cross country run, very dodgy under foot (especially after the rain) but once back by the Barrow it's a nice scenic flat run route.

The 1st lap was about finding my running legs. Turns out I left mine at home on the day. I had to stop 4 times to stretch out burning calf muscles and adjust my runners. I'd made the rookie



error of using a new pair of runners (purchased the day before) and I made a rocks of the lock laces by having them knotted too tight. My feet were numb and felt like lead weights for the 1st 7k or so.



The 2nd & 3rd laps I found some sort of rhythm and lock into a pace/HR that I expected to get me home. I'd accepted it was going to be a slow day so I just had to keep tipping away and ticking off each km as

it came. By slowing things down in the first 15k (not that I had much choice!), I just about had enough for the final stretch. I finished the run in a disappointing 1hr 51 mins but with nothing left in the tank, a DEADLY feeling btw. The new finish line position by the Dominicans Church isn't great (it was better last year) but with plenty of spectators welcoming you home & so many ATC crew around it was as pleasing a race finish experience as any and all the pain of the day magically faded away. Especially after tucking into the post-race chicken curry - Yummy!

I hit the stop button on the Garmin for a finishing time of 5:47:25. Not what I would have liked to post but pretty much what I deserved considering the (purposely) reduced training regime so far this year. I've specific triathlon/marathon targets for 2017 and this race will serve me well – Primarily as a good kick up the arse in terms of training required over the coming months. So job done.



MULTISPORT BY EAMONN.MCENTEE@HOTMAIL.COM ON SATURDAY @ 7:51 AM

 TriAthy Double Olympic 
Event Type: Race ▾ Course: -- ▾ Gear: Add


5:47:25


1:09:34
2:11 min/100m


3:00
4.6 kph


2:41:42
29.4 kph


1:59
3.6 kph


1:51:10
5:45 min/km

TriAthy 2017



Final note: While I am delighted to have completed the TriAthy Double Olympic challenge and enjoyed hugely participating & celebrating race day successes with my fellow ATC members and friends, this event will live long in my memory not for those reasons, but as the day the name of Eamonn McEntee appeared twice on the list of TriAthy finishers. Eamonn Senior (my dad) outshone any of my previous personal sporting “achievements” by completing a very special one of his own. “Baco” turned 66 this week, officially an OAP (hate that!) collecting his bus pass ‘n all! He decided to mark the occasion, not by travelling by bus but rather by swimming, biking and running his way through his first Triathlon (TryAthy).

Baco took on this challenge himself, with no coercion from me at all. I’ve see him work his socks off for the last 6 months or so,

completely immersing himself in “The TriLife” preparing diligently for it and to be part of his big day will be a cherished memory for years to come. Our paths crossed twice on the bike course & I quite honestly had to battle the distraction of very strong (but happy) emotions for a while after both. Fantastic moments shared between father & son, which drove me on to complete the course, just so I could get on with celebrating his success with him.

A big thank you to our brilliant club committee & members collectively for all the assistance, encouragement & support they’ve given him this year. With young Jack Mac completing the ATC junior triathlon this year too we now have 3 generations of triathletes in Team McEntee, all proud members of Athy Triathlon Club. A true family club, the best in the land. Go ATC.

