

THE LIFFEY SWIM – 9th September 2017



“We’ve just come home from the Liffey Swim” my mum told me over the phone. “You should do that” she said “we go every year. It would be nice to be there for a reason”. The challenge had been laid down and my journey to the 98th Liffey Swim began.

After doing some research, I realised with horror that I couldn’t just pay my entry fee and rock up on the day ... no I had to QUALIFY!! So what exactly does having to qualify mean? Well, it means swimming in the freezing cold sea in your togs for a min of 1600m – at least SIX times. Mother, this better be worth it!!!

As open water training was starting in the Barrow, I thought I may get myself acclimatised, so left the wetsuit at home. I got some strange looks at first! On one of my skins evenings, Joanne O’Brien came up to me to ask me what I was up to 😊 When I told her the plan, she informed me that she had taken part 22 years ago but would never do it again! However, when she heard there was bling at the end, a numbered hat and a t-shirt, her eyes lit up and she was sold!!! I had myself a buddy. YAY!!

RACE NUMBER 1– Seapoint 10th June 2017



“WTF am I doing here? I’m not a good swimmer. How the hell will I be able to swim 1600m with no wetsuit? I wonder is the water cold? Everybody looks so much faster than me”. Just a few of the many many thoughts that went around in my head. I set off down the steps to register, which generally involves giving your name and number, paying your tenner and getting your handicap! Very simple! However, this is where I found out that I am on a handicap of 2.30. Not knowing what this means, I sidle up to a member of 3D Tri Club and ask her how these handicaps work. She looks at me pityingly and tells me that I have to wait 2.30 minutes after the race starts before I can start swimming!!!! HELP!!!! This

can’t be right!!! The panic doubles and I tell anybody who will listen to me that this is my first race and I will probably be last and I have been given a handicap of 2.30 and I am definitely going to be last!! They are a friendly bunch and reassure me that they have all been last at some stage over the years. I strongly doubt this, but take a bit of comfort from it!

When the horn finally goes off, and I have waited the obligatory 2.30 minutes, I start swimming. F@ck it’s cold! I get out to the first buoy and think that this isn’t too bad. I reach the second buoy feeling happy. As I turn the buoy for the home stretch the demons start!!! How many of these do I have to do? Those waves are pretty big, is the finish line getting any nearer at all? Boy, this is cold!!

As I finally get to the end, I look back and there is someone behind me!!! I’m not last! Halleluia!! I’m second last 😊 but who cares. I made it!!!!

RACE NUMBERS 2-7 (Yes! I did an extra one just for the fun)

As the weeks went on, the swims became a little bit easier. The water warmed up and the confidence built. I was still in the bottom 10 but that never bothered me.

The race that stands out the most in these races was the one in High Rock Portmarnock on Saturday 29th July 2017. Why does it stand out? Well the day went something like this:

ME: "Joanne, are you racing in Portmarnock this afternoon"

JOANNE: "Yes, definitely"

ME: "OK, see you there at 1pm"

JOANNE: Thumbs Up Sign

Jump ahead to 1.30pm (registration closes now) – no sign of Joanne.
1.45pm – still not sign. Thoughts in my head "Obviously she's not coming"!!



1.59pm (race starts at 2pm) up she rocks and manages to blag herself a 30 second handicap!!!! Fortunately I was on GO at that stage Only Joanne could get away with it 😊

The sweetest part of the race – we came in practically together with at least 16 people behind us! My best result of the season. Thanks Joanne!

THE MAIN EVENT

Skiving off work on Thursday 7th September, I mozzied on up to Aungier Street DIT to pick up our packs.



Yellow t-shirts and hats that you won't miss. I look at the board with the hat numbers on it. I don't see my name. I look at those on GO and my name isn't there ... WHAT is going on? Maybe I'm on PRE-GO (these are the people that get a 2 minute head start over the rest of the race). NO, not there either 😞 I start making my way down the list and see Joanne on 45 secs. Still no sign of my name! Then I see it 1.30 mins!! Ah lads Someone has made a mistake?! Who do I talk to? Apparently no-one 😞 I just have to suck it up and come last!! I decided I wasn't going to let it ruin my day.

The morning of the race, the usual stomach problems kick in. Nerves, excitement, more nerves and the return of the head demons. What if? What if? What if!!

Before I knew it, I was lining up with 200 other women in our best swimsuits and smiles (and the false tan I had put on the night before), waiting for our turn to dive in. As I boarded the floating pontoon, I felt very emotional and fought hard to hold back the tears. Mum and dad This is for you!

"Alive, alive O, alive alive o" The best and most important rendition of Molly Malone I have ever heard (and sang). The atmosphere was electric and the cheers were amazing as the 98th Liffey Swim began!!

1.30 shouted the starter and I was off! Brrr it was cold! Head down and swim on. After the first bridge, I got into a rhythm "one, two breath" and so on.

About 300m into the swim I heard "BERNIE" being yelled at the top of someone's voice. I stop, look around and see them – Mum and Dad. I get teary again and while trying to smile and wave – swallow a good mouthful of pure stinky Liffey water 😊

My favourite bridges were Capel Street and H'apenny Bridges. I paused at the latter to drink in the atmosphere (and a bit more water)!!

Big mistake of the day though was swimming to the left coming up to O'Connell Bridge. The tide was high, so everybody went for the middle. It was too late for me, as I made my way under a cold, dark arch that was nearly within touching distance at the top!! Didn't like that one bit!

Coming out of O'Connell Bridge though, the finish line was in sight. I looked behind and saw someone behind me. I upped my pace. I wasn't going to be last after all!

As I floated at the end past the finish line, I looked up and saw the beaming face of my team mate Joanne. She shouted at me "We did it!". At that stage I started crying again.

After being showered down by the some pretty hunky firemen and the obligatory photos, I couldn't believe the swim had passed by so quickly. In fact I was disappointed. At this point, I looked at Joanne and said "Let's do it again next year"!!!!

