



TriAthy Sprint Report - Barry Healy

I'm a first time TriAthy entrant and second time triathlon entrant. I missed out on TriAthy in 2016 as I had committed to a half-marathon in (hilly) Tullaroan in support of our Special Olympics athletes. It was the toughest half-marathon I've ever done with relentless hills and dead sunny heat. I had done one triathlon previously; Kilkenny V-Graph Sprint in July, 2016 - a wise choice for first timers as the swim is all downstream. The location is also really impressive with the run finishing in the fabulous Kilkenny Castle grounds which really lifts the heart for the final push.

In terms of preparation, I would recommend SwimAthy (1 week earlier) as a precursor to TriAthy particularly if you suffer from race nerves as I do. Having seen the rain on the Saturday prior to Sunday's SwimAthy I was concerned that the 250m upstream would be too challenging for me since I had never swam for 250m upstream before! I completed the full 750m swim in 18 minutes which I was delighted with. Club swim training in K-Leisure and the Tuesday evening river swims paid off. It was essential for me to get some river swim training in to get used to the surprising difference between the pool and river environment. Having trained in the pool for the second year running I was used to swimming with just ear plugs & goggles, however as soon as I began to bring what I learned in the pool into the river I realised that facing the bottom of a cold murky river is a bit different from facing the pool floor! After experimenting, I put on my nose clip which I had been weaned off by Tony and hey presto I got the hang of river swimming after three or four sessions.

After a seamless registration and bag drop in a rather small bag-drop area I made my way over the bridge through Shaws carpark. As I lined up on the river bank I found Philip Foley and few others just in time to have a few laughs and settle in to 'start' mode. He gave me a great "leave no trace" tip which consisted of hiding my flip-flops in a ditch for easy retrieval later on. The term "leave no trace" and the ethos around it should really be adopted by all tri clubs. We met a very nice but slightly nervous young woman from Ashburn in a surfing wetsuit who was on her first triathlon. We dutifully gave her every piece of advice known to us and just after she received a surprise visit from her parents she was on her way with a smile. I'm not sure how she got on but I hope she enjoyed it. The 250m upstream was challenging but with the benefit of the rolling start I kept a steady pace. I had an urge to look out for family and friends on the bank while pausing for a few sneaky breast strokes. I had seen my wife (Tina) and daughter (Ava) just before I entered the water and saw them again just before the grotto so I was under pressure to impress on the downstream. I got back into freestyle rhythm and came in at 16 minutes - a new PB! Good thing about not doing too many events is that you get the opportunity to PB quite often.



Once I was out of the water I steadied myself for a few seconds and headed towards respite otherwise known as T1. I had done a recce of the 20km cycle on the Friday to make sure I could still ride a bike. Like a few others I had spoken to I hadn't been on the bike for a few weeks (since May 7th). All my recent training was either in the river or running. I had gone through this transition stage in the privacy of my home the night before which I would also recommend as it helps not only as a dress rehearsal but also to ensure you have all the gear you need on race day. Once out of the



wetsuit I dried off a bit and put on my t-shirt, ATC gilet, helmet, socks, sunglasses, watch and shoes - I already had Lidl's finest lightly padded cycling underwear and my ATC running shorts on under my wetsuit. I'm not really sure how it took me 7 minutes to do that but chatting with Philip again, who arrived just after me, probably didn't help! If I'm honest I tend to treat transition phases as a bit of a haven because... well because I can.

Having had a nice rest in transition I grabbed my Giant Defy 2 (which will someday be replaced by a carbon version) and ran out to the red mount line. Just before I clipped in I got a great cheer from spectators which included Tina and Ava and my neighbours; the Patels. On a high now I got into the saddle and pressed on up the hill and gave it socks for the next 20k. My good pace on a cycle is around 26kph so I was chuffed to have maintained an average of 30kph in this race. I found myself down on the lower bars for the majority of the cycle which I don't normally do and it seemed to help. Apart from a couple of near misses with fallen water bottles on the road everything went well here for me. Coming back in to Athy was a bit hairy though where cyclists and runners overlapped and could probably be improved from a safety perspective. I completed the cycle in 40 minutes and felt good.



Transition two only took me 3 minutes this time which is still a little bit long but utterly acceptable. I had borrowed most of Niall Foley's talc for my socks while setting up earlier which I'm pretty sure shaved off a few seconds and I made sure that the sock with L on it went on the left foot and similarly with the R labelled sock. These are the small things that *could* haunt some people, not necessarily me but I made sure anyway.



As I headed off for the 5k run I was confident that I had enough left in me to give it a good shot, so I did. I had run a leisurely recce of the route on the previous Thursday and was looking forward to this stage as it's my preferred activity. I did the run in just over 25 minutes which I was happy enough with. So all told I completed the Sprint in 1 hour 32 minutes and have just signed up for the Olympic next year (just to get the earlybird 20% discount) - but for now; roll on Kilkenny V-Graph in July and maybe DCM!

