

“Whether you think you can, or you can’t, you’re right”



think you

Celtic Warrior Weekend. I love it.

Its facilities, course layout, staff professionalism and friendliness mean have to worry about anything other than

BANK HOLIDAY WEEKEND

31ST JUL - 3RD AUG 2020

you don't turning

up and getting on with enjoying it. It is an increasingly popular location for families to visit for its list of outdoor activities as well as triathlon races and it's easy to see why. It is low on unnecessary frills very low on budget, high on service, support and sky high on smiles. Ah, it's just a gem of a spot. I'd previously stayed in local Air BnB accommodation but this year I decided to camp out – just to add to the experience and also because COVID restrictions demanded it!!! Pesky Covid, messing up everyone's life. Separating people from loved ones and friend. Scaring the bejazzuz out of folks over 50. People losing their jobs, their sanity!!!! Sporting events cancelled all around us. Still though, COVID is no match for Celtic Warrior!! Thanks to endless and highly diligent work put in by event host Franky Wright and his team (ensuring everything was covid compliant), to the delight of all, the Celtic Warrior show goes on.

This particular weekend is also a must for 'true lovers of triathlon/running'. The sorts of people that sign up for Celtic Warrior events are those who love the essence of sport. That being, participation, social interaction and personal challenge. I've been fortunate enough to have had great days here previously. I've never once turned up with anything other than excitement and confidence that I'd have a good day. There's just something special about it, for me anyway. This year had the added incentive of being something of a comeback year for me after a bit of a lost year in 2019.

A comeback year done with no shortage of support from family and friends. I'm a firm believer in the old cheesy motivational life mottos "anything is possible" and "life is limitless", but with the right kind of people by your side, there really is nothing you can't overcome or no limit to what you can achieve. This last year or so, I've leaned on the old reliable shoulders, my Dad Baco of course, inspiring me with his own Tri life enthusiasm as well as just always being there for me. Some close friends for their support & belief. There have also been a couple of people in particular this last year that have been constant positive influences and rock steady for me when I needed them. Even without them knowing they played a significant part in getting me to the Celtic Warrior start line. So thank you to Ger Prendergast for showing me "The way of the Deca man", leading by example in all things endurance/fitness/nutrition & mindset. As well as offering straight up honest inputs, guidance and encouragement, whenever called upon.

Thank you also to Caroline Howe. My frequent training partner, more frequent drinking partner, occasional councilor and willing arse kicker when needed. Good friends are essential & invaluable. I am extremely grateful to them all.



Right enough mushy shite about other people, back to me, me, me!!!!

In the ever expanding world of Triathlon pursuits, there is a relatively short list of multiple day IM finishers and to be very honest I wanted inclusion on that list. An ATC member

(whose name escapes me now) had completed a Back 2 Back Ironman (2 Full distance triathlons in 2 days) here last year. I remember him telling me that it was tough (which I didn't doubt) but I also remember seeing him on the run section at the tail end of both days. He didn't look too beaten up. Personally, I think his B2B Ironman was just a reward for the hard work done before it. He set out a plan to achieve his goal; he put in the required training and executed an event strategy perfectly. He was in control of his B2B destiny, he adapted to things that happened on the day(s) and just kept at it. Most importantly he believed in himself. I admired his planning, commitment and determination and self believe at the time. I wanted to prove (to myself) that I too had those traits/qualities in me. He's not getting any credit for inspiring me, he'd milk that for years but he proved it could be done. Nothing to fear blah blah blah..... Wish I could remember his name!!!

Anyway, there wasn't a scheduled B2B Full Ironman on the Warrior event schedule but Franky Wright was marking out the course and hopefully would have the chip timing up and running in time for Friday. Ger Prendergast had originally planned to do a Quin here, Wednesday – Sunday but due to injuries he had to scale back his plan. He is always in training mode of course but his offer to do whatever I was doing; “Team effort buddy” as he put it meant a lot. Serious respect and gratitude to Ger and his family for giving me their time. The Deca Dude in your corner is some advantage.

Unlike shorter events, time isn't really an issue with these long distance gigs (it's more a test of pacing than racing), especially with Celtic Warrior's relaxed policy on breaks and finishing times. Finishing is what matters. That said; there is a recognized standard cut off time of 17 hours for an Ironman. So I'd aim to come in under that, just to appease my own OCD. Ideally under 16hrs would be personally pleasing, under 15 probably pushing it but anything is possible. Anyway, the main aim was to finish 2 days. I'd spoken to Ger about maybe going for 3 days but that was beyond optimistic. See what happens.

I traveled to Lilliput (I love saying that – it always sounds like the start of a Fairytale adventure) on Thursday. Met with Franky to agree the plan, where to pitch the tent/base camp, course routes etc and set about putting up the tent. Talk about ordeal, Jazuz!!!!

By early afternoon however I was settled in and relaxing with Ger and Caroline who had also arrived, ahead of the weekends events. felt positive and quite relaxed and excited the task ahead.

Many a time in the last 12-18mths just to a point where I felt this way seemed I felt brilliant being here again. Looking to doing something I enjoy, surrounded by enjoy being with. Calm and ready.

Anyway, 2 pages in and the race report begins.....



Overall I about

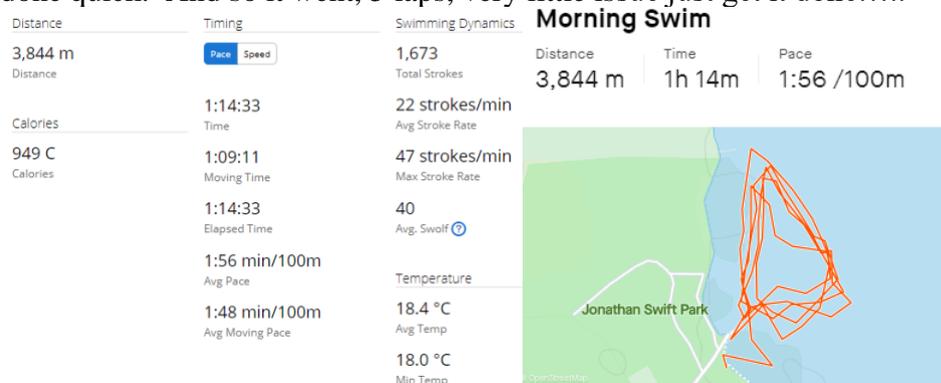
getting unlikely. forward people I

actually

Day one - Friday 31st July. Happened to be my 35th birthday too so what better way to celebrate than with a 5am club wake up call? I rolled out of the sleeping bag, grabbed my

breakfast & started getting the gear on. Everything had been checked and laid out the night before so use of brain cells was minimal. Just as well says you!!!!

6am – Swim start. I make no secret of the fact my swimming skills are minimal, my desire to improve them, non existent. Also, the opportunity for swim training was of course hampered by COVID restrictions. Plus frequent additions to my ever expanding tattoo collection (another of my midlife crisis passions) means I’m rarely dipping my toes in the pool let alone a lake. Anyway, it is what it is, no complaints, no excuses. The official course buoys hadn’t been placed yet but there were a couple of markers, so myself and Ger mapped out a triangular route of approx 750m. I know how to not drown, just a matter of blocking out the doubts, finding a nice comfortable rhythm and relax into it. This was where having Ger immediately helped matters. He set off, I tucked in behind him, drafting is legal in Ironman swim so happy days. I figured I stay in his slipstream and let him do the hard work. That plan lasted about 50m before he was away and gone. So I settled in for a solo swim. Poking my head up occasionally to catch sight of Ger. He waited at every turn and then went on. The further we went out, the water got colder, so there was added incentive to get that bit done quick. And so it went, 5 laps, very little issue just get it done.....

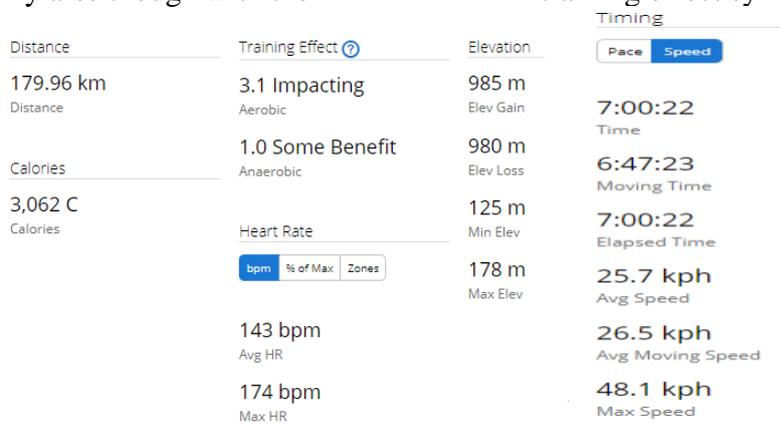


Transition was a relaxed affair, we took our time – 25mins !!! We both felt a little dodgy getting out of the water (Ger in particular so we didn’t rush things). I dressed for the expected Irish weather, checked the essentials (bike tyres, fuel/nutrition) and on we went. Caroline was in transition to provide some extra support and ready to accompany us on the 1st lap. Fair decent of her considering she had her own Ironman on Saturday to prep for. Like I’ve said, friends support is so important.

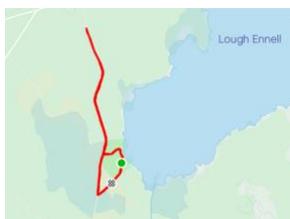
The bike is just shy of a 30k lap of left turns. Franky’s team had the course all laid out by Friday so it was just a matter of following the signs. Previous race reports have more detail on the course, but it’s relatively flat and decent road surfaces for the most part. There are a few cheeky gradual climbs and one very short sharp one that becomes increasingly difficult as the laps add up. I’d completed this course back in 2018 and it all felt nice and familiar which helps a lot. No getting around the fact that I’m quite a bit heavier and much slower than I was back in 2018 but again this isn’t a race. Just a nice long cycle. Ger was good company as usual. He is proper bike fit at present as he has just completed a virtual version of his cancelled Trans Am event. He did something like 3,500kms cycling indoors using Zwift He felt super strong on the bike and what was easy going for him was a little harder for me. Part of the multi day strategy was to stop after each lap of the bike. I’d stretched out the body, reapply some anti inflammatory gel on the joints and treat myself to a fresh dollop of Vaseline on the unmentionables. On a one day event you can suffer through it but you gotta take care of the body more if you wanna repeat the feat the next day. I’d also refill the water

bottles with trusty Tailwind. I swear by this stuff. Never had any digestive problems with it and I find it does exactly what it says on the tin. Throw in the odd banana & Lidl's finest Pan Aux chocolate & I never felt under or over fuelled. I'd also made some adjustments to my positioning on the bike aerobars. Raising it slightly, easing pressure on the lower back. This would pay dividends later on.

In hindsight, I probably pushed the bike a bit too much for the 1st day but it was a day for getting it done quickly as the weather was manky. Like, curse your head off, shivering soaking, f%\$k this for a game of soldiers, manky. We spent 7hrs on the bike on Friday and 6.5 of them we got p1ssed on. Saint Caroline appeared from the mist after lap 3 and blessed us with soul warming cups of hot tea and some grub. Seriously top notch support crew stuff. The weather was so bad it's hard to describe. I stopped 3 times to take off my bike shoes and squeeze my socks out. My feet were like soaked prunes, this was not gonna help the blister battle later. The rain drenched me to my bones, but it didn't dampen my enthusiasm or desire in the slightest. Truth be told, I kind enjoyed the hardship. I've missed it. Garmin can kiss my arse though with their "some benefit" training effect synopsis



Transition 2 was another relaxed affair. A total change of clothes. I sweat like a beast at the best of times so frequent gear changes are essential to avoid chills, friction burns and for basic comfort. More stretching and rubbing out of legs, more Vaseline, this time for upstairs delicate spots as well as downstairs unmentionables and then away I went. Out on the hardest but best part of an Ironman.

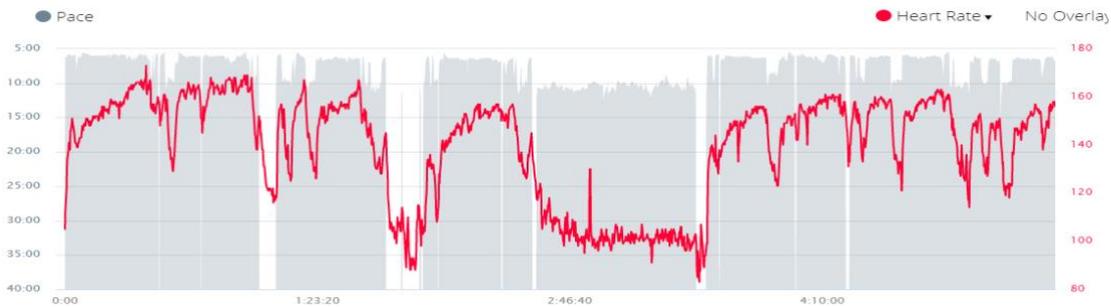


The run/jog/shuffle/walk/heel drag that is the Ironman marathon. Franky had set a 5k lap course (same as previous years) familiarity breeding confidence. I knew what was ahead of me. It had taken me 4hrs 40mins to complete the marathon here 3 weeks ago so I knew I'd be out longer than that. A long slog for sure but this is where my multi day plan would fall apart or be set up for success.

I had long decided on a run strategy:

Ignore the heavy leg feeling at the start and be guided by the cadence and heart rate screens on the watch. Don't even bother looking at distance or pace. I kinda knew the markers along the course for each km anyway. I'd slow down and walk if the HR demanded it, but assuming all was ok I'd still stick with a jog for 4k, walk for 1km. Or jog for 3k walk for 2k. Constantly assess my form, am I running upright? No slouching. Have I any sore points? Stop and stretch if/whenever the body felt tight. Regularly acknowledge the fact that I am doing something I love. I'm doing this because I want to. Appreciate the fact that I am able

to do it, so many are not. There was a time not that long ago when I thought I'd never do another marathon, this was my 2nd one this year. So take the time to look around, enjoy the surroundings. Think about things that make me happy, stay positive, be grateful and just keep moving.



And so it went, 1st lap tough, 2nd lap a little easier, almost enjoyable - I did both with Ger beside me or in sight. 3rd lap I stiffening up and time to dig in a bit. 4th lap was slow as expected but still moving. It was at the half marathon point though I experienced a serious dip in physical and mental capacity. I actually questioned “could I be arsed doing this”. I had absolutely no desire to run, none. Truth be told I felt quite down. Most likely the effects of pushing it a little too much on the bike, the blisters were starting to sting, the weather wasn't great & demons in the sub conscious were waking up. I needed a bit of assistance. I got it in the form of my ever reliable support crew. Caroline offered to walk a lap with me. Just a break from the effort, a break from my own head and a little reassurance. It took us over an hour to do the next 5k but it pretty much gave me the break and jolt I needed. Lap 6, 7 & 8 were completed with shorter slower spells of run/walk/stop/stretch but they were done and that's all that mattered.

Marathon time, 5hrs 27mins, Overall time 14hrs 24mins. After finishing, I felt relatively ok physically, mentally sound. I credit both to the lap 5 walk break and pep talk from Caroline. More importantly though, I was not totally exhausted. Day 1, job done, kind of....



After a few welcome congrats and thanks, I headed off to start my T3 strategy. This part of the challenge is something that was new to me. I'd previously be looking for the burger counter and heading off for a few pints but today was different. The mindset had to be I was still in an event. It was essentially another transition and probably the most important one of the weekend. For this, I'd garnered loads of guidance from the best in the business. When you need to know how to take care of yourself post IM day 1 and pre IM day 2 you can't do much better than a Deca UK winner. Ger has also had some brilliant guests on his spotify podcast recently too. Endurance event legends and I've listened to them all. I've been following several on social media and have been in touch with a few too.

One lad I've been hugely impressed by Nathan Michael Newton (or sexyboy as the ATC ladies nicknamed him after he joined ATC's Enduroman virtual event). The week before Celtic Warrior he had completed his own monster challenge of his first Quin Ironman. 5 Irons in 5 days. He smashed it in phenomenal times each day. Sub 60 hrs overall. Out of my league of course but just following his journey and feeding off his determination and grit really boosted my self confidence. Nathan is a sound fella, worth following. I expect to keep in touch and maybe even do some stuff with him in the future.

So, instead of basking in the glory of an Ironman finish it was away to do the necessary. I started refueling immediately, with a healthy nutritious home made hot soup (the spicy chicken wings and pints of Guinness can wait!! – Never thought I'd say that EVER!!). I made my way down to the lake for a 10 minute soak, to help cool down the legs and hopefully aid recovery. Another of Ger's IM tips.

I got myself warmed up with more soup and began stretching and rubbing out my back & leg muscles. Even brave enough to face 10 mins on the newly acquired acupuncture mat. A nice decent feed and gear check & it was time for bed. 11pm. Myself and my son Jack Mac (who'd come down with my dad to support & who also accompanied me on the last lap of the run – Total legend of a lad) zipped up the tent door and hit the sack. Tired and sore but fully confident I'd be putting on the wetsuit at 5am.

Day 2 – Saturday 1st August. It wasn't exactly the Bank Holiday Med weather I was hoping for. It was overcast and wet. Sure I'd be getting wet anyway. My legs had been set in concrete and set on fire over night which wasn't great but apart from being stiff and sore, a few blisters, there were no major injuries to report. I convinced myself the best thing for me was a bite to eat and nice swim in the lake. So I got about replicating Day 1.....

5am – Breakie. 5:45am head over to the race briefing & start line.

I met up with some of the ATC crew who were doing their own Ironman that day. Club Prez Rob O'Brien, talking sh1t about not having trained enough and seeing how things go. The lad is as fit as a mountain goat (what he subsequently decided to do 11hr into his event is unforgivable – I may not even vote for is re-election in October). Anna Deegan was also there; going for her first Ironman. Looking every bit the pro, she would go on to smash her Iron distance debut.

Caroline who I'd agreed a specific Saturday strategy with (both to pace each other on the bike) was also fiddling around with her bike and gear, worrying as usual. She cracks me up. I'd not the tiniest of doubts about her finishing, despite her having only recently recovered from a serious foot injury. Ger was there too, looking as fresh as a fella on a Spa weekend. Just a normal day for him!!! I was actually really pumped about Saturday. I was tired and sore but I was doing something I love. I'd have loads of "friendlies" around; I was also doing something new. I was pushing myself beyond previous Ironman accomplishments and that really excited me. To be honest I knew the day was gonna be really really tough but I was

already thinking about my race report!! I was 100% convinced I'd finish this double challenge.

So the approach for Day 2 was a repeat of Day 1 with maybe a dropping of the gears a bit for the bike and run. And so it unfolded.....

Swim – Nice to have company for a bit. I actually managed to latch on to the feet of Anna Deegan for the 1st 2 laps. A tidy swimmer, gliding in straight lines and lovely consistent pace. If I was drafting correctly she wouldn't have even known I was there, if she did notice she didn't mention it, so either way it was a good start for me. Nothing really of note on the swim. I lost my draft after the 2nd lap, the arms felt tired but it was the usual story, drank a gallon, puked a little, cramped a little, cursed a lot (especially when the marshals speed boat would pass and make waves!!!). Swim finished in 1hr 30mins. More importantly, I felt awake and positive.

Transition wasn't as slow as Day 1 but exactly what was required.

The weather was thankfully better than Friday. Dry and not too cold.

First 4 laps were comfortable. Myself and Caroline had agreed to pace each other today and we stuck to that agreement. By lap 4, I was very heavy legged. Chats with Caroline passed the time well. As well as a few words with all the half Iron bikers as they lashed past us. Plenty of familiar names on the course. Didn't see them all but Derek McEvoy gave us a shout. As did Damian Coogan (smashing his debut half Iron, well done fella). Mark Doyle was out there too, himself and Derek eventually finishing in the top 3. Monsters!!! Great to see Arno again, bee too long pal. Lara & Catriona overlapping us several times during the day too was nice. Even if they were in the wrong club colours. Bernie was of course belting out another half, great support from her tribe too.

I felt like I was eating well, definitely less than the previous day and the gut seemed to appreciate that. I tried not to think too much about the upcoming marathon because I knew it was gonna hurt. I really just focused on bike technique, monitoring my heart rate and soaking up the feelings and thoughts rushing through my head. Honest and sincere feelings of gratitude and happiness. I repeated some trusted mantras, determination and self belief stuff. I know some scoff at the benefits of positive thinking but I'm a firm believer and benefactor of it as a mindset. WAAAY better for ya than feeling miserable and doubting and fearing the worst. And so it went. Lap after lap, a little slower and harder each time but 8 hours later, job done.

Stats	Laps	Segments	Time in Zones	
Distance		Training Effect	Elevation	Temperature
180.88 km		0.9 No Benefit	1,132 m	23.6 °C
Distance		Aerobic	Elev Gain	Avg Temp
Calories		0.0 No Benefit	1,122 m	19.0 °C
2,354 C		Anaerobic	Elev Loss	Min Temp
Calories		Heart Rate	112 m	28.0 °C
		<input type="checkbox"/> bpm <input type="checkbox"/> % of Max <input type="checkbox"/> Zones	161 m	Max Temp
			Max Elev	
		113 bpm		
		Avg HR		
		154 bpm		
		Max HR		

Once again, F%&k you Garmin and your "No Benefit" training effect!!!! I hobbled like a 90 year old to T2 and allowed myself a sit down. Bad idea but so nice.

The welcoming committee, which now included Team Prendergast, Team Kane, Pdraig Kavanagh (with his two youngest fluffier kids) were all great. All throwing words of support

at me. I wanted to just get at it so after a 9 min transition I was ready for the tough stuff.....Saturdays marathon was going to be the longest run/jog walk I'd ever done.



The strategy had to change from Day 1. I knew if I tried to start off running I'd quickly get demoralized. The legs were too tired, simple. So I started by walking the first 5k lap to allow the legs loosen up a little and to allow the food taken previously to digest. The 1st 5k took 45mins. 10k took 1hr 20mins, so what, just keep on moving. By the time I'd hit 21k I'd been at it for 2hrs 40mins.

Time for a change of footwear and some much needed encouragement. The few words of encouragement I rec'd from my Dad, Paula Prendergast, Colin Mulkerrin, Zuzanna Day, made a huge difference to me. I was sh1tting on about pain and stiffness and blah blah whinging about all sorts but I knew deep down it was just the process. I was never quitting. That's where the stubbornness comes in. People say it's a negative trait I have. I prefer to see it as a positive quality. What's stubborn to one person is determination to another. That said the kick up the arse from some and the kind words from others were all needed and appreciated.

By 35k I'd been at it for 4hrs 25mins. I won't go on about it but my feet were like blocks of seeping corned beef. I really need to look into why I suffer with blisters so much but they were really really painful. My calves, quads, hips, back were all relatively ok. Sore and heavy but nothing unexpected. In fact I'd say better than expected. But the plates of meat were in tatters. I gave up trying to run on them. Accepting the best I could do was walk, once again this is where ATC friends stepped up. Zuzanna & Colin offering to join me on a walking lap. Zuzanna dumped me for Caroline when we passed her on the route but that's ok. Caroline was in the thick of an emotional meltdown at that stage, balling her head off but had no idea why!!! She's a special kinda crazy that wan!!! So Zuz went with Cookoo Caz and myself and Colin walked and chatted through lap 35k – 40k. Colin had completed his own half Iron Warrior challenge earlier in the day but stayed around to support us on the Full. Class act sir.

I'll let him share his warrior adventure (funny stuff) in his own race report but once again a huge thank you to him personally for his support. Footprints in the sand n all that sh1te!!! The last lap (a short 2.2k to make up the distance) was my favourite lap of the whole weekend. Myself and Jack Mac did it together. Along the way he (so humbly) advised me that he "technically finished 2 Ironmans this weekend, must be a world record". I love that kid more than I can put into words (same for his sister), having him with me was magic. Blisters didn't matter; we jogged the last km together. Proud as punch. Saturday marathon time 5hrs 52 mins, overall time 15hrs 43 mins. Job done.

Celtic Warrior B2B Full Day2 

Event Type: Uncategorized ▼ Course: -- ▼



15:42:43

1:29:44
2:14 min/100m13:21
1.2 kph7:58:27
22.7 kph8:46.1
1.1 kph5:52:25
8:12 min/km

228.27 km

Distance

15:42:43

Time

14.5 kph

Avg Speed

1,335 m

Elev Gain

6,206 C

Calories

The day was wrapped up by getting the gear out of transition and into the tents before the rain washed everything away. Seriously, did I mention the rain!!! The rain was unreal folks. After a short stint lying down in the tent, I joined Caroline for the last stretch of her marathon march – not a hope of me missing that & it was actually really cool. Worthy of a utube video. Me and her hobbling down the darkened bog land road with our torches, laughing, crying, talking all sorts of nonsense. Baco in the car behind us with the beams on. Real warrior stuff. The finish line was met with cheers and hugs and rain, did I mention the rain. Then some quick grub before everyone went to bed. Celebrations could wait till the morning.

I need to say something about Caroline at this point. Our club has some serious athletes in it, some ripped and shredded, fit as a butchers dog triathlon gods. We also have plenty of midlife crisis, beer swigging, middle of the pack sloggers like me. Loads of folks in it for the fun, social engagement, the personal physical and mental challenge of it all. We have people in the club who give their heart and soul, time and money to developing others. We have it all in ATC and I think they are all brilliant. That said, no one I know embodies the qualities of an ATC club member more than Caroline. Especially this last couple of years. I'm fortunate enough to know Caz outside the club. I consider her one of my best friends, but also an inspiration. She is a big softie with a heart of gold, frequently as mad as a bag of frogs and often as ditzy and dizzy as a dope. I'd make some blond jokes but she's not blond (she's grey!!!). Anyway, she also cares so very much about others. Often putting them ahead of herself. Along with that soft caring side however is a woman as tough as they come. Way tougher than she gives herself credit for. She is an optimist and most importantly a battler. This weekend was just a public exhibition of the grit and determination that she has in abundance. I really hope our fellow club mates and friends reflect on her accomplishments (can't wait for her report - get the Kleenex out). If you wanna know what toughness looks, walks and talks like, drop in to Caroline. Preferably with a bottle of Bacardi or Captain Morgans – I think that's where she gets her super powers from!!! I think she's very special, one of a kind. I celebrate her victory as if it was my own and credit her massively with anything I've achieved this last couple of years.

Pre publication clarifications:

ATC member and all round good guy, Arnold Kane is of course the lad that accomplished the Back to Back Ironman finish at Celtic Warrior 2019. Myself and Arnold would always keep an eye on each others achievements and goals. Friendly rivalry and shared sources of motivation and encouragement for sure. I was delighted for Arnold last year when he bagged the B2B. It pleases me no end to have joined him on the list of multiple day finishes. I look forward to seeing what he brings to the game next year. I'll tell ya now pal, I plan on doing 3 in 3 so bring you're A game!!!

Also, I must confess, I'm not 35. Truth is I'm 39. Ok ok, 43(ish). FFS I'm 46 ok!

Final word is one of thanks & gratitude. As I've said enough times now, the last 18 months have been difficult personally. I've needed some support, not something I'm used to taking, let alone asking for. People have stepped up and been there for me in so many ways. I set this Celtic Warrior Ironman challenge as a personal goal because I needed to get back to living my life again but it's a collective achievement really. I'd not have done it alone. Thank you very much to those who've helped me along the way. I feel blessed to know you and have you with me only reinforces my belief that with the right people by your side anything is possible and life is limitless.

Queue Oscar speech round up music....."Get off the stage McEntee".....

P.S....

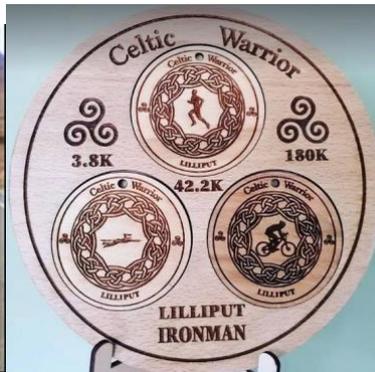


Photo gallery:





