

Keswick Mountain Festival: Long Triathlon (22 May 2016) – Kate Morris

Keswick long distance tri (800m/35k/10k) was my first triathlon (of two) of the season. It was just one of a variety of sporting events being held as part of the Keswick Mountain Festival. My iron friends Rekha, CJ and Dave came too, mainly they swam, ran and got a little bit tiddled.



Race day dawned and my long suffering Keswick based boyfriend Craig and I pitched up in transition. Bike racked, I dusted off my wetsuit and attempted to squeeze myself in to it. Clearly a winter of pies and lager had taken its toll and it ripped right across my bum cheek. Marvellous.

I hate swimming, you get wet and no matter how fit you are you can still be pants at it. Plus I have a mahoosively disproportionate fear of open water. I blame the public information films of the 1970's. Still, here I was, standing on the shore of Derwentwater, bum hanging out of my wetsuit and wishing that I'd started my 2016 swim training before January and continued it beyond February. However, my nerves were quelled when a nice lady in a canoe informed me that it was so shallow I could practically walk the swim. Sorely tempting.

The hooter went and we were off. Exiting the swim midfield rather than at the rear (and to the 'aw bless, these are the rubbish people'

half hearted claps of the few supporters left standing), I congratulated myself on a surprisingly not too shabby swim!

Duathlon is my bag, aside from the lack of swim I like the simplicity of it. Nothing to worry about in transition other than a shoe change. Triathlon involves more kit, I did take my wetsuit off before I put my helmet on, but frustratingly not my swim cap and goggles.

Out on the bike course I instantly regretted my lack of preparation in not doing a recce of the route and not having ridden my new posh aero road bike before race day. I was familiar with the route which took us over Newlands and Honnister, but I'd only ever ridden it in the opposing direction. Pretty useless really when you've got a technical course with a considerable amount of ascent, made all the more difficult when you're riding it with your knees crashing in to your chin because your seat post has slipped.

So, two Lake District passes, two episodes of getting stuck behind farm vehicles herding sheep, one episode of me herding sheep which necessitated some rather loud baaa'ing as it's the only 'sheep' I know, multiple gear changes as they kept slipping and I was back in transition.

I'd made up a few places on the bike, but I had no clue how far up the field I was. I excited T2 to shouts of 'second lady!' so I rather excitedly settled in to the run. I asked the next two marshals along the route how far ahead the leading lady was .. I got 'not far' and 'a minute and a half'. I figured that even if the latter estimate was a minute out she was catchable. The run route took us up Walla Crag which tops out at 379 meters, mostly runnable for a decent standard fell runner, but notorious for their love of bling to make them look fast, but not necessarily instrumental in making them BE fast, your bog standard triathlete is gonna struggle. So we walked. It turns out I can walk pretty quickly and I caught the leading lady at the summit.

As I approached the festival ground it was announced to the supporting crowds that the arrival of the first lady was imminent. That was MEEEE!!! Proper excited I hit the 'make way ... old lady coming through!' button and hammed it up big time ... I ran the final 50 meters arms aloft and beaming from ear to ear like a complete muppet.

Mr Mountain Fuel himself Rupert Bonnington was at the finish gantry, video recorder in hand. Sadly switched off and pointing at his feet. "Ooh .. have you finished?" Yes. "Oh! Did you win?!!!" Yes. So my moment of glory went un-noticed and I'd even taken the time in T2 to put my Mountain Fuel buff on. Brilliant. On the plus side Craig was standing there too, looking pretty sweaty and somewhat indignant. It transpired that I was only 48 seconds behind ... my best 'beat the BF' result yet! Get in!!!

Fantastic festival with a whole host of activities and a packed programme of events - all superbly organised. My prize? Just what I've always wanted ... a shit load of neoprene!