

Windsor triathlon 2009

By Bryan Keane

Just getting to Windsor had been a bit of an adventure. A 4.30am start, drive to the ferry, get the ferry from Ireland, followed by a half way stop in Bath and being put up ever so kindly by David Graham for the night, it was need after 2 days on the road, life between Limerick, Dublin and Cork has been taking its toll. David was to be racing but due to a chest infection had to pull out. So the last leg of the journey it would be me and my german tank on the motor way,

Registration was on Saturday and you had to leave your bike in transition then also. A race entry of 2500 people meant that it was a pretty huge transition area, and on race day the first wave goes off at 6am and keeps going until our elite wave goes off at 9.20, On Saturday I had to do a pre race interview with Channel 4. Dublin olympian James Cracknell was asking the questions. It was great to get some publicity like that. Good for the sponsors.

The start list was shown why this is regarded as the UK's premier triathlon, British world series athletes Ollie Freeman, Stewart Hayes, former Olympian Marc Jenkins, and many other international and British Continental cup athletes

Race day action unfolded in the river Thames, around the flat Surrey country side and in the surrounding grounds of Windsor Castle, and Eton. The weather conditions were perfect for racing. Diving in to the murky waters of the Thames at the start of the men's wave was not the most appealing of swims, it was quite the fight for the first 400meters. More like wrestling than swimming, everybody fighting for the right bank and to be out of the main flow of the river. Thankfully I was doing more pushing around than being pushed around. It's a hard course to navigate, as the river keeps pulling you out into the main stream. At about 750m I saw a gap opening up a head and went for it, never allow the gaps to open. As I got there the next gap appeared and I tried to cross that but it was too big, that was the back of the front pack, about 15 swimmers were clear. I was annoyed that I had missed the back of the pack, I have been working a huge amount on my swimming and this was its first real race test, in the end I exited 1 minute down on the front swimmers, Happy enough with that as in March when I last raced Stewart Hayes in the Oceania Champs I was 2 minutes down on him in the swim. So it's a positive progression.

The run to transition was a bit of an epic, they could have had aid stations along the way as it was that long, as I was entering transition the front group were leaving. I was quick and on my Argon 18 Galium Pro. Behind I heard an almighty crash, don't look back I told myself, never look back at a crash, as you will probably end up on the deck yourself. I got down on the drops and just rode. I know there would be some strong riders coming through in a pack so it was a question of waiting to see how long it would take them to catch

me. In the mean time I could see the back of the group ahead on the long straights, so I had a target to aim for. With in the 5km a group of 15 or more riders passed me and I jumped on. It was a little disorganized. In the end 3 of us did the work, James Gilfillan who finished 3rd at TriAthy and Nick Saunders. Nick was great to get the thing organised, unfortunately for nick he crashed as we were about to catch the front group, My self and James Jumped across when the gap was about 10sec and behind there was that unmistakable sound of bikes being mangled in a crash. I got to front straight away and rode hard making sure nobody else would get across, it worked and only 2 or so guys made the group. I had a go off the front with about 5km to go but was brought back straight away. Coming into transition there was more carnage with a crash in front of me which I avoided, Stewart hayes lead into transition and I made sure I was right behind he, there was 5 of us with a small gap on the pack, I was happy with the bike, I might have worked to much but 2nd off after being 1min down was good.

The run was a mixed bag, exiting transition and running into 2nd spot. Stewart Hayes just pulled away, half way through the 1st lap Adam Bowden passed me, I know he would be coming at some stage, with a 5km PB of 13.45 he can move fast. As he went passed I know Id blow up if I want with his pace. I settled into my rhythm and ran steady. It's a great run course and very scenic, not that I looking narrow old English streets, Windsor Castle. I had huge support from friends at the race, lots of shouts for come on Ireland. In the end I had to be content with 3rd place, A podium finish. I had said I would be happy with a top 3 before the race, maybe a step or two high would be good, but this was only my second race of the season. The form is building and I know there is more to come yet. It was good to hear Stewart Hayes was worried about us in the run

"I was pushed much harder than I expected' commented Hayes 'the weather was hot, but it was the competition that pushed me to my limits today. We all worked together hard on the bike but it's the run that matters and both Bowden and Keane are International runners so I had to pull out all the stops."

So that was Windsor 2009. Now its back to the training and continue the build to the European championships, they are only around the corner now 3 weeks left.