



## **RACE REPORT**

**Michael Doyle**  
**Ironman Busselton 5 December 2009**

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The aim – go sub-11

The end result – DNF

The long version of how it ended that way

### **Pre race**

Tuesday night, a week and a half out from race day. A two hour E2A long, slow easy run along Beaconsfield Parade ends the way it shouldn't – a really tight hamstring in my left leg. Numerous visits (and not a few dollars) to the physio at least gets me to the start line, though I know it's not even 50%. Both coach and I acknowledge it's a high wire act without a safety net, but we've come this far so let's give it a go. The swim and the bike will be okay, but the run ...?

### **Race week**

Arrive in Busso on the Tuesday afternoon. After stocking up on life's essentials at the supermarket – carbs, carbs, oh and ... carbs – I settle into the unit. The next few days disappear in a daze of training swims and cycles, but no running, expo visits, athlete briefings, and packing and unpacking and checking and rechecking the T bags to ensure all is present and correct. I drive over the bike course to check out the hills (!) and ride the run course to figure out where I'll make the surge (!!). In between all that I mull over the crosswords in The Australian and share a few coffees with those I've spent more time with over the past few months than I have with my wife. Well, almost.

Gail and my brother, Damian, arrive on the Friday. We enjoy his home made, gluten free lasagne on the Friday night. A few glasses of red would have topped it off, but I've resisted the urge for over 8 weeks, and now isn't the time to break out.

### **Race day**

Race day dawns, and it's almost perfect. A little breeze, but nothing to get too excited about. I arrive early and finalise the bike for the journey, loading the bento box with so much sugar in the form of jelly snakes it would make a dentist wince. I don the wettie, head to the swim start. Gail, Damian and I try and help Andy apply bandages to prevent his wetsuit chafing his neck and severing his head. It didn't look to be a great job, but then the resources were limited. Good luck, Andy.

The pros take off, which means it's just under 15 minutes before IM number 4 for me gets under way. Finally, the air horn goes and all those months of training are going to be put to the test. Unlike other IM swim starts,

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this one with its rolling start is moderately biffy free. I do not have to struggle to find clear water, neither am I being swum over or am I continually running into feet. Could it be that everyone's been truthful about their expected finish time? Alas, no. There's a minor skirmish after about half a k, but it doesn't affect me.

I get to the turn at the end of the jetty. Again it's relatively free of the usual belting and smacking that can occur around the turn cairns. I'm feeling good, more particularly because I haven't fallen asleep. Not literally, of course, but I've maintained the intensity rather than getting lazy and just rolling the arms over. I maintain that intensity all the way back to land. Standing up I see 1:18 and change on the clock. Take 15mins off because it started when the pros did and it's 1:03. Fabulous, a near 5 minute PB. Even if the rest of the day goes pear shape I have this as a memento. The average HR of 145 is a bit on the high side, but I exit the water feeling in high spirits.

T1 is a 6 minute disaster and the less said about it the better. Suffice to say that extracting myself from the wetsuit needs some practice. To the best of my knowledge no one was videoing me doing it; it would be a shoo in to win Funniest Home Videos.

Hitting the road on the bike I settle down quickly. The glutes are a bit tight but they loosen up after 10 kms. Dave Beitzel goes flying past me at around 15 kms, but I don't bother chasing him down to work off. Have ridden around 1,000 kms with him over the previous few months I know his capability on the bike. Mine doesn't match it.

I do, however, find plenty of others over the next 165 kms whom I can, and do, work off. The best one is a guy in my age group who passes me at 25kms. I think nothing of it other than to curse silently that he is in my AG and he has passed me. But he was going too fast to think about sticking with. Discipline rather than ego is the order of the day. Then, at 65 kms, I see him just ahead of me. I have to pass him as he's not going fast enough. 15 seconds later he comes screaming past me. Again, I don't bother to chase him down. 10 kms further on I pass him again. 15 sec later, you guessed it, he comes flying past. Twice more he passes me. Twice more I pass him within 5 kms. The third time I pass him I'm thinking, "any time soon". It didn't happen. A pity, I was getting quite a laugh out of it.

Like the swim I maintain the concentration, intensity, and food and fluid intake. The race plan was: a salt tablet when I got on the bike and then every hour thereafter; two sips of High5 every 5 mins and two jelly snakes every 10. Then stand on the pedals and stretch every 30 mins and again at the turnarounds. As I sit here typing this I think, yep, the plan was executed perfectly. Around the 90km mark I also begin pouring water over myself regularly. The temperature has risen and on parts of the course out of the wind it's quite hot.

I spot Andy at a couple of the turns, his head still on his neck. Obviously the bandages worked better than what I thought they would. I'm also thinking I can't be doing too badly if I'm only two minutes down on him. I pass Gail who's standing on some forsaken, windswept roundabout in the middle of nowhere cheering and encouraging vociferously. You've got to love and admire the support crew when they're that keen.

I get to the end of lap three and pass the bike over to the catchers. I glance quickly at the watch before I press the button – 5:15. Twenty mins better than what I planned Woo hoo. Not only that but the legs feel really, really good.

An analysis of the ride

	1 <sup>st</sup> 30k		2 <sup>nd</sup> 30k	
	Time	Average HR	Time	Average HR
Lap 1	53:23	139	50:36	137
Lap 2	54:10	137	52:33	138
Lap 3	54:59	135	49:49*	136*

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\*Either my speedo doesn't work or the course was 2.5 kms short. Total reading for me was 177.5 kms.

Somehow I manage to lose another six minutes in T2 by just fluffing around. And this time I didn't even have a wetsuit to extricate myself from. True, finding a vacant Porta Loo did take some time, but not *that* much. After relieving the pressure on the bladder I finally hit the road a bit lighter. This was too much for the legs as they all of a sudden decided to go on strike. Well, not really. They just turned to jelly. I walk/jog/shuffle the first kilometre to try and get things back on track. I do.

Kilometres two and three are then spent trying to get the heart rate under control. All this excitement! That finally achieved I settle down, determined to pump out the next 39 between 5:40 and 5:55 min to get that elusive sub-11.

If only. I feel a twinge in the hamstring. It doesn't stop me, and I think, if it remains at this level I can live with it. Unfortunately, it doesn't. Three kms further on it goes bang and it's all over. I walk the next 6 kms to get back to the change tents, disappointed but not overly upset. I knew the odds, and they weren't in my favour.

### **The upshot**

Not finishing was disappointing, but I came out of the day with a new found belief in myself. That I could do a near 5 minute PB in the swim and go 20 minutes better on the bike than what I predicted was very gratifying. But without a time for the run, I'll never know what the end result would have been. A 4:10 mara, which was what I was aiming for, would have pushed me into third in my AG. It's speculation, pure and simple. Still, it's nice to dream of what may have been.

Next time ... maybe.