



RACE REPORT

XAVIER COPPOCK IRONMAN WESTERN AUSTRALIA 2008

Swim – 58.09mins

Ride - 4hr 42mins 27th overall 2nd 30-34 age group

Run - 3hr 41mins

Total - 9hr 26mins 50sec

57th Overall - 11th 30-34 age group

Well, where do I start....(prob from the beginning you say!!) What an awesome experience to go over to WA and attempt my 1st Ironman Triathlon. Had completed 3 1/2 Ironmans prior to heading west with my times improving from 4h 55min shep 2007 to 4h 26min shep 2008.

With consultation from Coach Mat, we decided mid year to make the next step into the unknown and have a crack at WA.

Benny Rob, Ron Z & I all arrived on the Wednesday prior with Ron catching his ZZZZ's when Benny and I got in at about midnight. With the excitement of our 1st Ironman, we were like two kids in a candy store and were high on chocolate and coke from the drive, we decided to set up our bikes when we got to the apartment, after midnight!!!

This done, was time for shut eye and find out what all the hype about doing an Ironman was about on the Thursday morning when we awoke!

With my body deciding to awake at 8am (6am Melbourne time), my eyes stinging through lack of sleep, I arose to see what the day ahead was going to deal me. I discussed the itinerary with Ron and Ben to see what we were going/ needed to do. After heading down to the supermarket for supplies, we made sure we got all the carbs we could for the feast we were going to have of the following couple of days. Pancakes, rice cream, pasta and bananas consumed most of our trolley and we headed back to ENJOY our meal (i say enjoy, as after this meal, every meal there after became a chore).

A ride to make sure everything was tight and wheels intact soon followed. After lunch headed down to see the longest pier ever and then realised how far 3.8kms actually is.....A long long way to swim.

We registered at the compound and this is where I realised how big of a deal an IRONMAN is.....from the finish shute to the transition area to the registration area.

Ron, Big Boy, Ben and myself headed in the water for a swim which was choppy and actually had me questioning weather or not I could actually do this thing. With the water quality so clear and seeing schools of fish swim under, it made me realise that there could actually be some BIG fish out there.....

Thursday arvo was just chewing the fat with the boys and getting advice from Ron about different things that we should prepare ourselves for during the race. Ron had some advice that I would never have thought of.

Friday followed along the same lines as Thursday with some clowning around and eating and eating on the hour every hour, this became a massive chore for me. We had another swim and small ride during the day also. Ben and I decided that we would take a look at the run course, which was prob not a good idea, as witht he swim, i realised that a marathon is not for the faint hearted normally and us silly fools were attempting one at the end of 3.8km swim and 180.2km bike!! (Why would we do that?)

We heading down to the carb load party, OH MY GOD, Glutteny!!! 1000 athletes enjoy the spoils of endless pasta, rice dishes and desserts. This was a great experience that I would suggest that everyone experience at least once. We didn't stay for long, just enough to eat and enjoy some entertainment.

Our wives arrived Friday night, heavily affected by the bottleS of wine that they consumed on the trip over, some fun was had here and then called it a day.

With Saturday dawning and the weather just starting to peak for race day, the entire ETPA crew including coach headed down for a swim together. Coach Mat lead the way, with Ron, Komo, Big Boy, Jimmy D, Monas, Benny, James Harvey (enjoying the view from the spectator side this year) Kenny, David, Ben and myself had a good hitout in the water before heading off to relax for the remainder of the day.

The 1km swim race on the Saturday afternoon, which Mat smashed and took the chocolates set the tone for what was to follow on race day.

Checked in transition bags, which gave me instant nerves hoping that I remembered everything needed for the following day. Once checked them in, had to forget about that side of things as nothing could be changed now, just look forward to the experience.

Pre Race briefing was another eye opener seeing athletes from 1st timers like myself and

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many others to some totally crazy fool who having a crack at his 107th Ironman (not a typo) yes, 107 of these things!! The word sharks was mentioned a few times, which made my stomach a bit uneasy, afterall 1.8km out from shore is shark territory. Briefing went for 45mins and was rather enjoyable amongst the standard race rules etc.

The remaining of Saturday was spent by Ron, Ben and Myself throwing random objects in the ceiling fan in our room, trying to not expend any new found energy from the carb loading.

Saturday ended with an early night, 7.30pm, thinking that I would toss and turn with nerves, however had a magic sleep and awoke just prior to my alarm at 3.30am.

RACE DAY:

After consuming my usual liquid breakfast, Ron, Ben and myself heading down to transition to finally attempt the Ironman. Bags packed and off we went. Parked the car and headed to the bright light, only transition was lit up, and upon seeing this, my stomach churned and started to vomit!!!! Yes, vomitted everywhere with Ben and Ron laughing at me, the nerves had finally got me. My thoughts of around a 10hour Ironman (all things going right) went straight out the mind set with just finishing on the agenda now.

After setting up bike and getting into my wetsuit, headed down to race start with thousands of spectators also waking early to see endless hours of pain ahead. The pros took off 15 minutes ahead and then the count down was on and the butterflys going berserk in my stomach. I positioned myself reasonably wide to try and get a clear start to my swim.

With the horn sounding, off I was to attempt my 1st Ironman. Hoping to break 1 hour in the swim, i found a really good rythm in the swim and enjoyed, yes enjoyed the first k. From here, race tactics started to enter my head knowing that there was going to be large amounts of people in front of me on the bike and then trying to decide how i attack the bike course. I continued my comfortable swim and found some feet to sit on to conserve engery. Getting to the end of the pier was no stress and with this in mind, I knew i was going to get through the swim in under 1 hour. Towards the end of the swim, about 300m to go, some nuff nuff decided he wanted to swim over me, WTF??? SO with some hard kicking, think he got the picture and sat off me until the end. Standing to see hundreds upon hundreds of people cheering on their loved ones, I heard my Lovely Wife cheer me one, thanks babe!!! Looking at my watch.....58mins, you beaut, swim went spot on plan and gave me some confidence.

Grabbed T1 bag and into the tent, emptied the bag, hoping that I had the essentials, number, helmet and shoes, check, check and check. Had some nutrition and off I went...180.2kms of bike to go.

My mindset on the bike was to ride 5hours give or take a couple. So I took off the first 30kms to ride passed some slower riders who had out swam me until I found a good rythm and then just switched off. I never really gave much thought that it was 180k's just a three lap bike course and as i went passed transition, i just ticked off anther lap. Was great to get

support from fellow ETPA's on the course and the surprising and yet so distinctive Coach's booming voice over the PA system in town also was supporting (thanks Coach!!)

Seeing a few drafters made me think that there was no way known I was going to be "one of them" (sorry Ron!) Into the last lap I really enjoyed it and just made sure I had enough nutrition to start the run, had my final bottle of water and High 5 and left my bike with the handler at transition. Bike Time: 4hr 42min AWESOME - 3rd in age, 27th overall and onto the run in 26th spot...(WTF this was never expected, all of a sudden I had 4hr 20 to do the marathon to go under 10unders, I am a chance here)

Into the run, grabbed my fuel belt and off i went, just ticking over at my own tempo, with runners 1 by 1 starting to pass me, but did not bother me at all, was just there to finish my 1st Ironman under 10 hours now!!!

Still getting massive support from all the support crew from ETPA (wives and family) kept me ticking along and even managed a 1hr 40 min 21km, wow, that is not much slower than my 1/2 marathon pace. Starting to do the Maths, I was on track for sub 9hr 30mins, this cannot be right, I must be miscalculating, I cannot go that time ever, not at all in my 1st one. Got to 30km and still haven't stopped and seeing all the boys on the course made me start to really enjoy it, knowing the training that I had done, week in week out. I knew I was becoming an Ironman. By this stage I was taking nothing for chance, so I started to walk every aid station and consume plenty so that I would not BONK!! So with walking 50m and running 2 km i was still going to out live any expectation that i ever thought i could achieve.

With 2km to go, I decided to miss the last aid station and really enjoy the finish, with people lined up for a good k out from the finish chute, I knew this was going to be amazing. I took off my glasses and zipped up my suit and heard the commentator call me up to the finish, the words - XAVIER COPPOCK - YOU ARE AN IRONMAN, was just a awesome feeling and sense of achievement. Oh yeah, just before the line, I saw my number 1 fan - Belinda Coppock aka Wife and gave her a big kiss and cuddle and thank-you. After this i crossed the line.

When he called out my time, 9hr 26min 50sec, I had to look at my watch to make sure it was real. Yep sub 9hr 30min 1st Ironman, and a 3hr 41min marathon, WOW. Surprised myself and everyone else that I spoke to. Just goes to show that if you back your training and your ability you can go fast - Even at 94kgs!!!!

With realising all this, I have to thank many people who have helped my journey:

My Wife (Belinda) for all the 4:30am starts she put up with!!

Ben's Wife (Tammy) see above

Ben - for being an awesome training partner and experiencing the journey with me

Coach Mat - I know he doubted me going that fast, as we all did, did a fantastic job getting me to the line in A 1 condition.

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The ETPA crew - even though I trained alot in isolation, just the support you gave me.

And all the supporters on the day.

I have alot more that I could have written, but some things I am keeping to myself for future reference, when something this big goes so correct, you can't give all secrets away, but hey feel free to ask!!!

So, where to from here: A good season of 1/2 Ironmans and then attack Busso '09 and onto bigger things from there!!