



RACE REPORT

JAMES DUNCAN CAMPBELL'S SHEPPARTON HALF IRONMAN

Summary (read this if you want the hard facts and numbers):

Time: 4:36:59
Swim: 25:56 solid
Bike: 2:35:46 ack!!
Run 1:35:17 solid

9th in age-group
50th overall

Solid effort, happy with my time. Definite room for improvement with quality taper, improved race strategy, improved mental approach, tweaks to nutrition and attention to mechanical issues. Quality B race result, fulfilling requirement with regards to highlighting fitness gains and areas needing to be addressed.

Race Report (read this if you want a long winded, ramble about the race and what I will take away for future races):

Build up:

Shepparton was on the race card based on timing and financial reasons. It's seven weeks out from my A race, Tauranga Half Ironman, NZ 5th January 2008, making it a good lead-up and it's only a couple of hours drive north of Melbourne, meaning no need for airfares etc.

The plan was to go into Shepparton with a "training race" mindset. The Coach, Mat Tippett, warned me well in advance that there would be no full taper and little recovery afterwards. I would be racing tired and winding back into full training ASAP after the event. I was fine with this as I want to be all guns a-blazing in NZ in January, in front of the home crowd, my family and Kiwi friends.

There were two issues I found with going into a race with a "training race" mindset. The first of these is the possibility of talking yourself out of a result before toeing the start line. I found myself making predictions when people asked of "having a crack but not expecting much as I will not be tapered" and "it's just to see how I go and get pacing/nutrition and stuff right".

The coach reminded me that I need to go in expecting a strong showing and to be confident in my training to give me a result despite any fatigue I was feeling. I am not sure I achieved that... The second issue is that I am a highly externally motivated athlete and to think that I was going into a race in which I may not perform as well as I might like was a considerable stress on me. Sprinkle on top of that, the "I have busted my gut for the last nine months with a new coach and surrounded myself with solid athletes, what if I haven't improved much? What if I only do as well as I did last time out ...?" For a psychologist I sure do have some issues to work through with regards to race build up. There have to be huge gains for endurance athletes (including my self) from improving their mental game in training, race lead-up and during racing... Hmm there could be a career in that...

Race Morning:

Race morning, I was feeling in control, I have raced many times before and I am pretty good at a slow controlled build of nervous energy running up until the start line. I was feeling good after a restful nights sleep despite waking up a few times and having a nightmare that I had the wrong wheels on my bike (whatever that meant). Pre-race nutrition was all liquid form, which I felt was a success, however it may have resulted in my being over hydrated pre-race relative to the conditions and may partially explain the constant need for relief felt throughout the race.

We got down to the race venue nice and early and started setup. I was a little thrown off by the bikes already in transition thing, as I would usually take the stead for a quick spin prior to the race start. This was one of the mistakes, as minor technical issues on the bike were a concern; the lack of a proper warm-up was another. I was thankful for my priceless race support crew, Fay. Without her to carry, hold, pass, anticipate and generally let me focus I would have been considerably more stressed and less sorted on race morning. Once all was ready, body parts that required lubing were lubed and the wetsuit was on it was down to the lake (puddle) for a race briefing that was too long and ate into any chance of a warm-up it seemed. By the time the race director had finished and allowed us to file through the finish chute and walk around to the race start I was lucky to have time to enter the water and get to the start line let alone warm-up or get positioned for the start. Next time the race briefing will take second place to a warm-up if it's one or the other.

The Swim:

I was on instructions to find a strong swimmer and sit on them for the duration of the swim, preferably the leader or as close too. A solid plan which I was reasonably confident I could achieve (one of the top few at least). The wheels fell of the swim plan when I got zero warm-up. I know from experience that I will feel magic for about 200m swimming from cold and then I will hit an unseen wall and have arms of lead for about another 100m or so and then I will come good and cruise from then. The lack of warm up meant I hit the wall during the most important part of the swim, the trip to the first turn buoy. Couple this with being late to the start line and picking the wrong swimmer, meant I lost the lead bunch earlier and probably with it about a minute in the swim. I realised at about 500m that my draft was not cutting it and went round him and tried to bridge to the leaders but never quite made it and

decided I was burning too many matches trying. So I buttoned off and swam the remainder at a more conservative pace. It seems the guy that I hoped would drag me round, dragged off me, he passed me at the end for the glory exit. I let him have it and floated on his feet for the last 200m. Exiting the water I was all about trying to relax, sucking in some air and calming down, running through the transition in my mind as I headed for the stead. Swim time 25:59 1st age-grouper and 10th overall out. Solid time, with potential to improve with the right draft.

The Ride:

During the swim the heavens had started to open up and they were just warming-up for the ride. The ominous mention during race briefing of pulling us from the course in case of an electrical storm was in the back of my mind, it bucketed down and thunder and lightning joined in. The conditions made for treacherous conditions and on the second lap one of the casualties came rattling past me missing a few layers of skin and half of his rear drink bottle mount. I wasn't having any of that and I passed him back. We passed each other a number of times during the ride and I knew he was coming each time because his broken drink bottle holder was rattling like mad.

For the first 20km of the bike I was struggling to find my rhythm and drop my heart rate to a more respectable level. For the last 70km I was still trying to find my rhythm but was struggling to get my heart rate as high as I wanted. I had pains in places that I hadn't in the past in my quads and I couldn't help wishing I could find the same powerful feeling I had during a training ride the previous weekend. There were a couple of sections on the bike where I felt awesome and flew past other cyclists, but the majority of the ride was an exercise in searching for the mental or physical trigger to get moving. I also think playing in the back of my mind was the demoralising 2:10 21km I had in my last race after pushing the ride. I wanted to have a solid run and wasn't sure how hard was too hard on the bike. I think I went too soft.

The new stead courtesy of some old ladies front bumper was great and the borrowed race wheels were wicked. Throughout the ride the back wheel kept rubbing on the brake pad, I stopped twice to sort it out but it returned soon afterwards. I don't know how much real time it cost me but the noise it was making sure was robbing me of my focus.

Nutrition was an issue throughout the bike and I have a feeling I didn't get enough fluids in due to the need to pee that plagued me throughout. There was no way I was pulling over to go and could only squeeze out small amounts while free wheeling as there were no hills to relax on. I made a conscious decision that it could either come out or my bladder would explode and I probably didn't drink enough because of it. I lost a lot of positions on the bike and I think that I have a much faster ride in me. I know the conditions were tough but I think I may be able to ride a good 5-10min faster with little effect on my run time...we shall see... we shall see...

I was glad to be coming in off the windy wet course after my third lap and hadn't considered

the effect that torrential rain may have on my run gear sitting on a towel in transition. I hadn't imagined after the weeks weather predictions that putting my shoes in a plastic bag would be required, I think even on a 40 degree day I will be bagging my shoes none the less in the future. It's not a very cheering experience wringing out your socks before putting them on then squelching out of transition with 21km to run...

The Run:

Despite the heavy shoes and wet socks, I felt strong as I headed out on the run. I was conservative over the first 3-4 km stabilising my heart rate and getting some carbs into my system. I early stab of the dreaded stitch gave me cause to worry but this came right and I started to feel stronger as the run progressed. The first 7km went by in 30min and I was happy with my pace and felt like the next 14km would be all good.

I again felt the need to pee during the run and was considering my options with regards to pit stops. I decided that stopping still wasn't on the agenda and had a crack at 'urinating while running at full speed', the word on the street was that running and peeing was not possible. I am happy to say that it can be done...twice. Now they weren't particularly reliving pees, but they certainly took the pressure off... one of my proudest moments... best followed by water at the next aid-station.

The second 7km went by in around 31min; it was about 14km in that I started to get concerned. Both my calves were sending me urgent warning signals that total crampage was about to ensue. I have had problems with cramp, in my calves in particular numerous times in races and training. I was seriously worried that if I cramped, that it would mean a catastrophic slowdown to walk or crawl for the remainder of the run. At 7km out that is a big chunk of time, even at 1km out its significant. Close to 5min is my guess between a solidly ran 1km and a hobbling walk. At this point I went into crisis mode. I adjusted my running style to be calf friendly (read: all glutes and quads) started to take on more fluids at aid stations and threw back a few salt tabs I had in my back pocket. I have never used salt tabs in training and I remember commenting pre-race "I know I should never try new things in a race but if I am feeling like I need the salt tabs that badly to take them without practice, the race is probably about to implode anyhow" and I think I was right. I have a feeling that without the salt tabs I may not have made it to the finish line. The last 7km went by in 33:30min and I was s**tting bricks the whole way. Every curb or corner was a possible game breaker and I was literally bargaining with my calves for the last 1km, that I would stop running and stand still or even lay down if they would just get me to the finish line. I have a feeling that some changes need to be made to avert this situation in future races. I am unsure if it is hydration, electrolytes, run form or a combination, but the last 7km my heart rate was dropping significantly and my engine had power to spare but cramp was my limiting factor. I think another 31min lap was on the cards. 100m from the finish a guy in my age group overtook me. I consulted with my calves on a sprint finish and they told me I could have a sprint/crawl finish photo or a respectable jog over the finish line. We agreed on the jog and let him go.

I was most happy with my run, I ran the same time I did in my last fresh 21km and only 3min off my PB. I think a sub 1:30 is on the cards in the next HIM or so, if my calves concur.

Post Race:

Once I had crossed the line I thanked my calves and thanked the timing chip remover for removing my chip and saving me collapsing trying to remove it myself. Then I was all about the caloric consumption. I polished off all sorts of junk food washed down with 1.5ltr of Gatorade and this was the pattern for the rest of the day. I am not sure how I managed to get in so much food over the course of a day but it was good to eat with abandon. I got a free massage from the race masseuse and enjoyed cheering on the other ETPA'rs, all of who were having great races. The rest of the day was taken up with a snooze in the arvo and lots of stretching. I have recently been using Skins compression tights in my recovery plan and I feel there are significant benefits in sleeping in skins the night after races and/or heavy run training days.

Thank yous:

Despite this being a B race, I think it's important to thank the people that get you to the start line

A big thank you to:

- Coach Mat Tippett, without his expert input I would be still a self coached, slower athlete and I think you are going to take me to my potential (did someone say Hawaii...?). I encourage everyone to invest in a professional coach, its money well spent. Check out www.etpa.com.au for coaching plan options.
- The ETPA crew for the hours spent hurting together, as training is much more bearable with someone to hurt with.
- Finally, Support crew (Fay) as she is an important part of "Team Duncan" and I would be lost without her expertise in the racing from the spectator side. Hope you had a good time too.

Jimmy D
Out.