



ROYAL AIR FORCE TRIATHLON ASSOCIATION

9 Sep 06

INTERSERVICES RACE REPORT Vitruvian, Rutland Water

This was my first time racing the (almost) half Ironman distance at Rutland Water (1.9k/85k/21k); only previously having done HIM at Aberfeldy a few times. I very nearly didn't race as it was only a week after we lost the jet at Kinloss and I just wasn't sure whether or not it was the right thing to do, or whether I was really up for it. In the end I decided it was a fitting way to remember them and raced it particular for my kayaking buddy Gareth Nicholas; I still can't believe he isn't coming home.

The organisation of both this race, and Dambuster, is excellent and a great introduction to larger open water races. The chance to check in the evening before allows for less stress on the, inevitably early, morning of the race. Multiple waves mean there are fewer people to battle with over the first few 100 metres, but I guess that also means there are fewer to draft off!

My wave was all females and some older gentlemen. This is a two lap affair with a short run which allows you to clear the goggles and pull out the duckweed from your nose clip – always a bonus! The swim to the first buoy was very uneventful and I was in clear water when I turned for the second leg. I have to say it could do with a mid point buoy as sighting was difficult and you only had to drift slightly to the right to find yourself in very shallow water. In fact, in some waves I believe there were a number of people who stood up and ran to the deeper section! In this area it was pretty muddy too.

I entered T1 and found most of the bikes around me still racked, this isn't usually the case, I just assumed they were for another wave!

Out onto the bike course which is undulating (those who haven't raced Aberfeldy would call hit hilly – those that have wouldn't!) and again a two lap affair. In the first 10 miles or so my pump managed to slip and was in danger of catching the chain so I stopped for a quick adjustment. During lap two my chain slipped off, so another stop. Other than that though it was fine; I did battle with a couple of girls through the second lap which probably helped to keep my pace up.

Back into T2 and I managed a quick change of shoes etc and set off onto the run discarding my Camelbak (the bladder fell out) as I went. The run is entirely off road following the Dambuster route across the Dam before continuing further to a turning point by a church. Again another two laps so you have the chance to see where you are in the field as athletes return as you head out. I spotted Lindsey Courage the Army champ at about 2k she was looking very comfortable as she neared the beginning of her second lap (she eventually finished a little over half an hour ahead of me). Thereafter I only counted 4 more females which seemed somewhat improbable to be honest. However, toward the end of my second lap I was passed by one of the girls I'd tussled with on the bike and another fast-finishing lass in training for the New York marathon. I therefore crossed the line in 8th position overall and grabbed 3rd in my age group. Probably my best race for quite some time and a great way to close what has been a long, long IM season. Quite where the strength/speed etc came from I shall never know but I felt it was a very fitting way to remember our lost friends.

The RAF contingent were resplendent (mmm, that might not be quite the right phrase!) in their kit and it was great to see them as we passed each other along the run. The Army appeared to be absent although it turned out only a very few actually wore their kit and they were the overall victors with the RAF chasing them into second slot.

Kelda Spratt