Athy Duathlon no.1 Race Report.

Transition and the run course was built on Saturday afternoon in quick time by the hearty crew under the watchful eye of Peter who acts as Race Director for the series again this year. No details were spared as Declan and Padraig sorted the kerb entry to transition and tidied up the mount/dismount area and Lily and myself were on litter duty. Paul and Diarmuid did the run course taping. The assembly area was tackled and prepped for registration and food. Barriers, Cones and Sand Bags were unloaded courtesy of Kendra Engineering (Dan Curtis). The bike racks were laid out. Sneaky Training! Honest.

Sunday morning greeted marshals and racers with a leaden sky. Despite this there were plenty of registrations in the morning and approx 100 hardy souls braved the elements. Registration and racking was hassle free and a good spot was secured for the bike. As Athy is flat and fast it was TT bike but many took on the course on hybrids and mountain bikes which shows that you don't need to be a speed demon to participate. After the usual debate in my head over how much to wear I eventually opted for Trisuit, base layer and gilet with light gloves and the club neck buff wrapped around the noggin. The great thing with buffs is you can wear them under a helmet (after adjusting the retention straps) or shimmy it down around the throat. Easy to dispose of or tuck away too.

Next up it was time to warm up and get some heat in the muscles. An easy lap of the run course and not too many others had the same idea, I met Koe Whelan from Trilogy out on the course but most opted to stay inside until the race started. After some stretching and the usual banter it was Race Brief and out to the start. The heavy hitters headed to the front and it was second row for me. Conor Tiernan took off like a scalded cat and put the hurt on early. I backed off after 300 metres to avoid burning matches early like Naas 2 weeks ago but there were plenty putting the pressure on young Conor. Out the front gate and down the lane way and the bunch had thinned out and the hares were pushing on. Mark Doyle was biding his time to inflict maximum damage on the bike (as usual) and Will Byrne was in the mix as always. Bronagh Adams, Kim Doyle and Aoife McEvoy (Trilogy but Athy born and bred) were pushing hard among the ladies. Sinead Wearen (Trilogy) was not too far away either in her first Duathlon in 4 years. Still tough as nails.

T1 came and went smoothly with no delays. I managed to get the toes in immediately and came out the gate out of the saddle and felt much better than my last race. Time to get aero and pedal like hell. 12km out and then back on a straight road with little elevation gain. Wind was behind on the way out but the road was drenched and the feet were soaked in no time. Thankfully I was clawing back the places lost on the run and the beauty (or misery) of an out and back course is that you get to eyeball who is in front and what is coming behind around the turnabout. Dave Heeney was patrolling the bike course and has clearly mastered the art of cutting back the revs and drifting up behind you.

As always the marshals were shouting encouragement and I did not envy their task on such an awful day. Conor was still leading after the turnaround and has clearly improved his biking in the past 12 months but was being hunted down by the hounds and in particular Darth Doyle who led into T2. After the turnaround you began to feel the wind and cadence began to play its part as you try to grind your way back home. Top lady Bronagh was giving me a run for my money on the bike and I knew that I had to get a good gap or I was toast on the second run. However having a tussle does encourage you to push harder and we both benefitted from the contest.

After what seemed like an eternity in the wind I made the turn back in towards the dismount line and eased the feet out and hit the ground running. Helmet came off easy and a dry second pair of shoes awaited me. Top tip! Off I went in 6th place with 5th well ahead. The calves registered their usual protest and I concentrated on the turnover on the soft grass but spied my nemesis coming up behind like a train. Around the back of the school and high fives with all the Juniors gave a nice lift. Across the road with more encouragement from the great marshals and onto the lane way where Bronagh hunted me down and put a gap in very quickly. Game over for 6th as my legs were not capable of anything more and off she went into the sunset never to be caught. Met Mark with Conor hot on his heels and Will not to far behind at the entrance to Reeves gate. Looking tight for the win but they had the podium stitched up between them. Got to the turnaround but Joe Morris did not want to tag and finish it for me so off I plodded keeping a beady eye on the hunters coming behind but the gap was comfortable. That said there still a few looks over the shoulder just in case. Kim Doyle, Aoife McEvoy and Koe Whelan were all coming up hard behind as was Daithi Kidd who has better running legs than I do. Finished in 7th which was a positional pb for me on the Athy Course. 1.07.08 in the end. Happy Out.

Good day for the Club with Conor and Mark taking the top 2 podium positions in the men's and Kim taking 2nd in the ladies with Aoife McEvoy taking 3rd.

Stayed out for a few minutes before heading for the heat inside and soup, tea and Maggie Owens yummy cake. If we could get Peadar to eat more it might slow him down or perhaps it is his secret weapon? A warm shower was very welcome and the usual comraderie was in evidence as everyone made it back in. Then off to dismantle transition and again there was a great crew at hand to help out. Feet up and relax. Swiftly followed by another bloody virus and 3 days out of work. Bummer!

As always many thanks to our marshals, race director, committee and sponsors and in particular Richard Daly for making it all happen.

Late bonus though as my name came out of the hat for the Free Lactate Test. I have a feeling that it won't be fun though!!