# Race report by Arnold Kane

## IRONMAN 70.3 DUBLIN 20th of August 2017

**Profile:**

Name: Arnold Kane

Age: 43

Nationality: Irish (born and raised in The Netherlands)

Marital status : Married to Donna Kane

Children: Shauna(14), Roisin(10) and Niamh (10)

Occupation: Driver

Triathlon history: Started in 2016 and could barely swim 1 length in the pool (learned to swim when I was young, but never really swam after that, except for some recreational! ).

2016; 2 sprint distance triathlons, 1 olympic distance triathlon

2017: 1 middle distance triathlon (Double Olympic Athy)

Training regime leading up to Ironman 70.3:

After D.O. Athy, injured for 6 weeks, so no running. I did 1 or 2 cycles per week and 1 swim per week. Then started building up my run slowly during holiday mid-July. Holiday in July for 2 weeks with plenty of drink and food. Gained about 6kg.

Got to do a good few sea swims on holiday.

Longest run a week before Ironman; 15 km.

2 treatments by physiotherapist Ger Whelan in Kildangan. Because of ongoing niggles and a sore knee.

Managed to shift 3 kg’s again, but was still nowhere near where I intended to be!

One could say the preparation was far from ideal.

AND SO IT BEGINS

Eamonn asked me if I would be interested to write a race report. I said I would try, as it’s not really my thing. After I finished it, Donna pointed out to me, that writing this report has taken me longer than doing my race! That should give you an idea what it’s like for me to do this! But I do enjoy reading other reports, so it’s only fair.

After reading the 41 page athletes guide, I had to read it again and again to let register what I actually needed to do to get ready for the iconic ironman 70.3 race! Maybe that says more about me than the athletes guide…I’ll leave that up to the readers.

To make it more relaxed for myself, I decided to break up the “getting to the starting line” process.

Friday morning 9:00am, before work, I went to Dun Laoghaire to get the registration part done. Parked the van, walked up to the transition area where the ironman marquees were set up. Walked in and straight away woke up in Ironman dreamland. I stayed strong and fought my way through the Ironman cups, mugs, t-shirts, jumpers, bibs to finally reach the registration part at the back of the marquee. Once there it went quick, there was only one person in front of me, so I was registered in 5 minutes. I got my bag and straight away they tagged me. I was now under their control. I was told not to remove my tag a.k.a. bracelet, as this now is my identity for the rest of the weekend. Participant number 600.

I moved on to the next marquee to be brainwashed about the rules and regulations around the event. Also called Briefing.

Everything went very smoothly.

In my race pack I got 3 different bags, one for swim/bike transition (T1), one for bike/run transition (T2) and one for street wear. At home, I got all my gear in the right bags. Now I had everything ready to set up the next morning and wouldn’t have to stress out about it. Saturday was the day to go rack your bike and bring your race gear over and leave it there untill race day. The queue for registration on Saturday was quite long, so it looked like I had made the right decision by doing it on Friday.

Packing your bags is not that easy. A lot of thought went into it. What to pack, in which bag to put it, what nutrition etc. Of course me being me, I was overthinking things, which lead to some rooky mistakes. I did things everyone says not to do. Bought some new Suit Juice to stop friction/rubbing from the wetsuit on my skin. Also I was going to bring my tried and tested peanut butter/jam sandwiches for the bike leg…..not! I went with the not tried and tested powerbars. I bought some overshoes toecovers a couple of days before to use them out on raceday. In previous races and training my feet went numb. Some club members told me that the toe covers make a huge difference.

My wife Donna, two of our daughters Roisin(10), Niamh(8) were with me on Saturday. My eldest daughter, Shauna(14), decided not to go and would rather not be seen with her dad at this particular time of her puberty!!.

I racked the bike and dropped the race gear in transition. From there the Ironman crew would look after all of it. They bring the T2 bag to T2 which is at a different location (Phoenix Park). Very Fancy!.

When I racked my bike, I checked my tyres one last time. Bad idea! I saw a spot on my front tyre that looked dodgy! I started to worry. Walked out of T1 and told my wife and anyone else who was willing to listen to my moaning. I went to Wheelworx, who had a repair tent set up outside and told them about my problem. When I told them my bike was already in T1, they said they couldn’t do a whole lot for me anymore. They told me not to worry and that they will have 3 assist vans on the road during the race….so I would be in good hands. I was still worried. I was either going to bring a new tyre in the morning and change it or pretend I never saw it…..

We strolled along the promenade and soaked up the atmosphere. We walked into David and Siobhan and their kids. Had a little chat, told them about my tyre worries, made some seal jokes and went our own way again.

We went into the merchandise shop and almost bought everything, but luckily managed to walk away with nothing!

It was all very relaxed (except for my tyre worries).

Went home and did some more carbloading (variation of pasta and sweet potatoes for the last three days, made by my own personal nutritionist!)

SUNDAY RACEDAY

It was 3:45 a.m. when the alarm went. We didn’t sleep very well. Woke up a few times afraid of oversleeping (and thinking about my tyre).

I stood in front of the mirror and said: “mirror mirror on the wall, who is the best ironman of them all?”

I hope none of you were expecting an answer, cause mirrors cannot talk….lol.

In my head I had made a race strategy! I only really race myself but to make it more entertaining for myself I visualize a race. In this case, with fellow club members. So I had chosen Ciarán M. as the man that would be chasing me and Padraig K. as the man to catch up with!! I chose them because I know Padraig is in good racing form and if I was at my best, I would stand a chance to get close to him judging on previous races. Ciarán is an up and coming star! He had not beaten me yet (in races, sportives don’t count for the insiders of this story!) and I knew it would be a matter of time till he catches me. I was hoping this would not happen untill next year. I had not taken into account that there could be a dark horse and a conspiracy to try and beat me…as will come up later on in my report (remember, not all facts are based on reality!)

My wife had asked me earlier in what time I thought I would finish the race. I said it will depend on my running. Due to injury and lack of training (have to get the excuses ready!) I did not know how my legs would be for the run. So if all goes well, it will be around the 5hr40 mark, if all goes ok-ish around 6 hrs, and if things go bad anything around 6hrs20 to DNF.

Donna was kind, and mad enough! to bring me to Dun Laoighaire. This would save me from getting up even earlier to go to Phoenix Park and getting on a shuttle bus to T1/starting point.

Roisín and Niamh wanted to come along too.

At this point I said to my wife I was going to pretend I didn’t see the tyre problem. She agreed (probably sick of me going on and on about this tyre!)

We had arranged to pick up fellow future (half) ironman Ciarán Mulhall and Declan Dunne with Dutch precision at 4:40 and 4:45. Declan did not understand dutch precision and went with the Irish precision, i.e. made us wait. In hindsight, this might have been a part of his race tactics to beat us!

Ciarán and Declan sat in the back of the car. They started to bond very well and never left each others side anymore for the rest of the day!! My brother-in-law (Ciarán) deserted me! It was the beginning of the end!

We arrived at 6:00am in transition. The forecast for the weekend wasn’t great. They had predicted a hurricane of some sort, called Gert. But it turned out to be a nice soft morning with a very calm sea, no wind. A little bit chilly, but ok. Temperatures were around 10°C in the morning to approx.17°C in the afternoon………….perfect race weather!.

In transition we met up with our other club mates. There were a few new and familiar faces for me.

Everyone seemed in good spirit and not overly anxious!.

I decided to bring up my tyre problem one more time. After I made Joe, Caroline, Kieran and Ciarán look at my tyre, they convinced me it was nothing but some old dried up tar from the road. My mind was finally set at ease…… I could relax! Speaking of relaxing, as with all races, there are 2 big worries; 1: nutrition, 2: toilet before a race! No.1 was taken care of, but 2 was still to happen! We were getting closer to race time (7:00). Next thing I saw Ciarán Mulhall walking back from the portaloo with a big smile and thumbs up! It was clear to me he had a successful toilet trip. This reminded me of my G.I. system! So I made my way over and had to queue up for a good 15 minutes to get to the toilet. It was now 6:40 and it was my turn for the portaloo! I too came out with a big smile! The timing couldn’t have been better. I put on my wetsuit and rubbed my newly purchased ‘Suit Juice’ generously on my neck and shoulders, then off we went. One last group photo in transition made by Karen Kavanagh before we set of into the sunset to Sandycove Point/Forty Foot.

There we listened to the National Anthem; watched the professionals start the race; wished each other good luck and looked for our self seeded start position. Declan and I went for the 40 minute slot. Padraig moved more forward. The others I lost track of. Declan and I stayed talking to keep ourselves distracted from what was to come. As we approached the sea entrance we saw some friendly faces. Colin Mulkerrins was there to support us! And on the beach was our very own Technical race official Vivienne(hope I got the title right!). Very aware that she could give us a blue, yellow or red card for any errors (as explained in the athlete guide), we were on our best behaviour!

Every 6 seconds 4 swimmers entered the sea. This was very relaxed. Ducky and I got in at the same time. Straight away you were in your own space. No pushing or shoving!

Out we went heading to the first buoy. Sighting was fairly easy because of the calm sea. The first part was straight ahead. The tide was coming in, so this slightly pushed me to the shore- made it easier to follow the route. This first stretch was the longest part. At the first big buoy, we went left towards the shore, and then took another left. At that point it felt a bit tougher…we were swimming more into the currant and the waves felt a bit more up and down. I started to feel a bit of a burning sensation in my neck…..nothing too serious I thought! We came to the last buoy to turn right to the swim exit. From there we had the rolling waves in our back and they pushed us to shore and made the last part fast and easy.

I exited the sea and could hear the crowd cheering!

To me it felt like I was in the water quite a long time, but it was a very relaxed swim.

I ran into transition with lots of cheering around me and some familiar faces.

I got my bag with bike gear and sat down to get changed. My neck felt like it was on fire! Apparently the ‘Suit Juice’ did not work very well!! But I got on with it. Had a bit of a chat with Daithi and Keith about wearing a gilet or not (went for the gilet), Took a dip of chamois cream for the groin area and put the bag back on the rack. I was doing well and was the first of the three of us to go…. But only to forget that I had to bring the race bag to the designated area! So I had to run back and lost my head start. As I ran out to my bike, I got the first glimpse of Donna and the kids. It was great to see them there! Donna shouted to me which lane to run into to get my bike (ssshhhhtttt….don’t tell Vivienne!), which turned out to be the wrong one (thanks Babe!)

Of I went, hopped on the bike and all was good. Behind me, 2 seconds on the bike, the first crash took place. A Guy cycled into the fence trying to overtake. He got back up and seemed to be ok. Straight away this made me aware to stay focused on the bike!

I was particularly looking forward to this part of the race. Cycling along the coastline into Dublin city Centre without any traffic is a great sensation!

I was told the course was a flat one, which in general it was. So my bike and I got a bit of a fright when we came to a steep hill, I believe, it’s called Knockmaroon Hill. We wanted to turn around!

I bought my bike secondhand knowing little about bikes. After the buy, I decided to actually investigate what I bought. I found out the bike is set up to be a real speed machine for flat courses. (53/39 at the front and 11-25 at the back for the techsavy’s). So climbing on this machine with my legs is a bad combination. As soon as we see a hill we freeze and come to a standstill.

The good thing was, I was not the only one struggling with the hill (which is only a climb of about 50 to a 100 metres, but fairly steep. In fact, I think all tribike lads struggled with this).

So I had to get out of the saddle and do the stairmaster thing. I decided not to worry about it and see it as a welcome break out of the saddle. On the course, as far as I remember, there were another two of those kinds of climbs. Nothing too serious, which was good, because I know both Ciarán and Padraig are good climbers, as they showed during the Leinster Loop a week earlier…. which was not a race...haha....all fun and games lads!

The next part was the lower road which I heard about in the race briefing. They said something about a speedbump. Turned out there were about three billion speedbumps on this road! It was a bit tough on the behind and quite annoying, because you could not go full blast.

I think it was at the end of this stretch I saw two competitors down in the ditch. They had just crashed and were fairly banged up. Two ambulances arrived at the scene fairly quick. I hope it looked worse than it was.

Again I was reminded to stay focused. The route took us into county Kildare, Meath and back into Dublin. Along the way there were a good few supporters to cheer us on.

For me the bike leg went by fairly quick and uneventful. I felt really good, and kept the pedals ticking over at a nice cadence (sounds like I know what I’m talking about). I was in the zone! I felt I made the right choice nutrition wise with going for the powerbars. They worked well for me and gave me no stomach cramping and enough energy. I took two of them in total…I think. I had drunk about 800ml of electrolyte/carbs drink out of my drink bottle which is located in between my tribars and got a bit of extra water at one of the stations to top it up. On my down tube I brought a bottle with a mix of 4 gels and water. I only took one sip out of it towards the end…..didn’t really need them.

Entering Phoenix Park, I arrived in T2. Racked the bike, went into the tent and put on my running gear. I then decided to go for a toilet stop which was quite a relief! I already felt like going during the swim, but managed to hold it in until now and actually forgot about it at different phases of the cycle.

As of yet, I have not managed the art of peeing during swimming or biking!

I felt that my little imaginary race was going well! Even though I had no idea how the others were doing. I knew Padraig was still in front of me and Ciarán behind me but because my cycle felt strong, I knew I was in for a chance as long as my running would not let me down!

I ran out of T1 into the Phoenix Park arena! This was it, make or break time!

3 laps of 7km!

**Lap 1:** My legs were heavy and stiff, which is to be expected coming off the bike. No numbness in my feet!! So the toe covers or the physiotherapist had done their job! I would like to think they both did! Or else I paid too much money for one of them!

I did a body check. My Back and my right leg (as usual) were a bit sensitive, but very manageable (I had taken some ibuprofen earlier on the bike).

Everything was under control. I checked my watch and was going at a pace of around 5:15min/km. I was flying! Too fast really. When I went out like this at the Double Olympic in Athy, I started to get stitches after 2 km. so I decided to try and slow it down to 5:30/5:40min/km. I knew I should eventually be able to hold a pace at around 5:45/5:50min/km once I was settled in to the run. If I kept that up, maybe Ciarán would not catch me…and maybe I could catch Padraig with that small bit of extra speed at the beginning.

I soaked up the atmosphere straight away. Massive crowds on the run course with big cheers everywhere. It felt unbelievable! I saw familiar faces in the crowd encouraging me: Karen, Shane (the nice lady shouting beside them), Eithne, David, Anna, Niall, Darren (hope I didn’t forget anyone!)….it was just so heartwarming!

Noel, Marian (Ciarán’s parents), Sharon and Niamh (Ciaráns wife and my sister-in-laws).

My wife Donna and two daughters, holding up the sign they made “IRONMAN GO DAD #600”….my first emotional breakdown just arrived!

Wow… how I respect all these people to put up with all our silliness! I felt like shouting out “love you Guys!” (racing endorphins taking over!) but managed to keep my cool, swallowed back the tears and smacked out a few high 5’s instead! phew…that was close!

The run course was fairly flat. The nice thing about it was that at one point a couple of hundred metres onto Chesterfield Avenue you do a sort of U-turn. This means you can see who’s running behind you and in front of you…………… NO sign of Padraig!

As I was about to leave this part, I saw Ciarán coming on to this stretch……..he was catching up with me! NOT a good sign! Yet we gave each other a big smile and egged each other on! Not far behind him I saw Declan coming up! I wasn’t expecting him yet! Ducky has improved hugely on his running and swimming! Turned out these boys, like I said earlier were still cruising together! That’s it….I knew it…they had me on their radar and I swear they were working together!

At the end of this part you run past the red carpet i.e. the finish line. you turn right if you’re finishing and go straight on for the next lap……on to lap 2

**Lap 2:** There were already a good few going over the finish line. At this point I enjoyed watching these guys crossing the finish line as I went on for my second lap, still going fairly strong. Earlier at around the 5k I think, I had taken a gel (powerbar) at the waterstation. One provided by ironman and which I had never tried before. It did not agree with me! I decided not to use them anymore. Before the race I had already planned to walk through the waterstations. I did this at the Double Olympic and it worked for me.

I heard a voice passing by saying “your flying Arnold, keep it up”. I saw something blue and small flashing by….I’m fairly sure it was John Sourke….but he went so fast, I couldn’t confirm it!

Around 8/9km I started to feel a niggle around my left knee….at 10km it felt like someone was sticking a dagger into it again and again and again with every step I made!

I had this three weeks ago around the same distance in a training run. The physio had rubbed it out (arisen from a tight IT-band). Tested the legs after with another training run and the problem seemed to be solved.

Unfortunately it was back again. At this point I knew my imaginary race was over . I would not catch Padraig and Ciarán and Ducky would catch me soon.

I did the entire mind over matter stuff! And some of you might have read my ‘train of thoughts’ on the ATC member page, where Mr McEntee offered me a penny for my thoughts on a particular picture of me during this race.

By the way Eamonn…you owe me a Penny!

I stumbled on and stopped at every waterstation to consume a banana, coke(as in pepsi coke), water and electrolyte drink. They did not have Guinness….I asked!

I was back at Chesterfield Avenue and on the turnaround, I saw Ciarán behind me a little bit closer than the last lap…….but not as close as I expected. We looked at each other and he pointed to his hamstring. He was limping a bit! I told him to slow down and take it easy, then you’ll make it. He said ”I have no choice!” In my mind I laughed and thought “there is a God!” I stood a chance again of at least not being beaten by young Mulhall!

There was no sign of Ducky! Another good thing! I felt on a winning streak again (well second after Padraig) It gave me hope and got me going for another 100 metres. I passed the finish line ‘junction’ and I so wanted to turn right for that finish line! But no, I had to go another round…lap 3, the last one!

**Lap 3, Final Round:** This was an absolute mental battle. My goal was now to just finish the race and keep convincing myself to keep going one way or another. I went to some dark places, but managed to snap out of it every time. I didn’t know how long I could keep this up and went from waterstation to waterstation. That’s all I could focus on.

Next thing, to my surprise Ducky passed me! He had overtaken Ciarán and now me. He patted me on the back and said “come on…Ciarán is right behind you!”, as if he had a look inside my head and knew about my imaginary race!”

I couldn’t and admired his strength. Ducky was Flying! I was happy for him! And told him to go for it…or something like that!

Not much later Ciarán flew up beside me and grapped me and said…”come on..finish this” he dragged me along for a few metres. I said what the hell happened with your tight hamstring???”

He was back in the game! He told me he drank gallons of electrolyte drink at the water stations and the hamstring was good again! Good thinking Fair play to him!

I could not keep up with his pace……….. I wished him well as he ran off into the distance!.

The day had come, he bet me! Fair play. He put in the hard work and deserved it! I was very proud of young Mulhall! Another small emotional break down, as we kind of started this journey together.

It had started raining 25 minutes ago. I didn’t mind, but not so nice for the supporters and the ones that were still out there racing.

I had reached the last kilometer on Chesterfield Avenue. There was still a good crowd at the turnaround part.

I was determined to run the last part between the last water station and the finish line where the big crowds were gathered. Everything went through my head one more time; the little ATC flags that were planted all over the run course (I think I even spotted one on the bike course aswel!) Thank you Karen! They are, strangely, very comforting to see! I thought about the ATC team that were out there and fighting their own battles like I did!

Fair play to all off you: John Cuddy, John Sourke , Siobhan, Caroline, Bernie, Nici, Martin, Joe Morris, Ducky, Ciarán, Padraig, Keith, Arno, Joe O’Regan, Stephen ,Kieran ,and Daithi (I hope I didn’t forget anyone, as I did this on the top of my head!)

What a super Club!

What a teamspirit!

But most of all….Thank you Donna, Shauna, Roisín and Niamh!

You are all beautiful!

That was my last emotional breakdown before I ran into the crowd…towards the finish line!

I high fived Padraig, Ducky and Ciarán who were on the other side of the finish line as I finally got to turn right onto the red carpet! I saw my wife, kids and family! And in the distance behind the finish line, Ciarán was waiting on me with open arms. Everything was forgotten and all was good! The mental and physical pain magically disappeared. My name went around Phoenix Park over the speakers as the mc shouted out ”Arnold…You Are A Half Ironman!”

The race was over and the mental battle was won!

“It’s a beautiful pain” (Eminem)

We went to the athletes tent, had some food, got our medal engraved and picked up our finishers t-shirt.

Later that night a few ATC members met up in the Emigrant in Athy for a few drinks and some war stories. It was a Beautiful Day (U2).

It’s a race I hope to revisit one day, because I have some unfinished business. I REALLY enjoyed it and I would recommend to put it onto your bucketlist.

Is everything I’ve written factual….I don’t know….but it’s my version of the truth.

Finishing time: 6 hours, 2 minutes and 2 seconds.

Swim: 40:42:19

Cycle: 2:47:11

Run: 2:19:39

Arnold Kane.