



What a difference a day / week / month makes. May saw us all standing around shivering at the lake but by June we were all sitting around with the sun on our backs. All I needed was a piña colada in my hand and it would have been heaven. Long may the good weather continue.

This month **Steph Page** and **Daniel Essen** give us their accounts of the training event back in May when the weather wasn't quite as toasty. The committee are planning on hosting more of these in the future so if it is something you'd like to do then read on! **Patrick Esser** proved that it isn't just the Dutch football team that has what it takes (at the time of going to press they were about to play the semi-finals) as he conquered his first ever triathlon, which just happened to be an Ironman... And **Charlie Wilson** left me blushing as I had to read about what cycling does to a man's privates. This article does come with a disclaimer so please - no complaints!

The pre-Blenheim swim sessions were a roaring success and I'm sure all of us who helped out realised how much other people benefited from them. If you haven't tried out the lake yet, then make sure you get Thursday evenings and Saturday mornings down in the diary. I think we all agree that the new venue is brilliant. One of the biggest events of the year, the Blenheim triathlon saw the Oxford Tri contingent out in full force. Whether competing, marshalling or spectating, it is a great event to be part of. Check out the photos of both courtesy of **Julie Smith** on pages 9 and on the website. And this month, we are running a "spot the elite triathlete" competition as this edition features...that's right, you guessed it. An elite athlete. Answers on a postcard folks.

Thanks to those who have contributed this time. Please get in touch if you have been up to something and you want your fellow Oxford Tri members to hear about it.

Until then, *keep tri-ing...*

Sarah

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## Date for the diary

### Awards dinner

Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2010  
Conference Centre Oxford, Park End Street

Get the date in your diaries. More details to follow!

## A peek to the future

The club is going great guns; we have the most members ever and there are lots of smiling faces to be seen. There are more sessions, a new lake, *Tri a Tri*, not to mention the usual Blenheim-related sessions and the club race being the biggest ever. This gives us a very busy and vibrant club we should all be proud of.

To run all of this requires help from the members: volunteering for safety officers, timekeeping, Blenheim marshalling etc. We also have a fantastic coaching team and committee that put in hours of free time. A massive thanks to all for helping the club get to where it is. This is one of the points to be raised, we all do it for FREE, for the love of the club. Currently no one in the club gets paid for any of their time.

This is where we have to take a peek to the future. More members, more sessions, more paperwork, more responsibility, more expectations. Having more club friends is great, but there is a limit to a point where growth means change.

With 300 members we have to run the club in a professional way. I hope and believe we are still a friendly and down-to-earth club, but for how long can we depend on goodwill? British triathlon has noticed us; they have called to a committee meeting and asked why we are not involved in regional management and where is our junior section? I believe we are in the top five per cent size-wise of any club in the country and we are certainly the most successful in the local area. Yet looking at the stats of clubs with the same number of members and sessions we are running very lean, with a relative few number of coaches and no paid coach / help staff.

I do get feedback that more sessions are wanted and this requires more coaching. *Tri a Tri* stretches all coaching resource to the max but shows that we should be doing these sessions to the less experienced club members (although I believe it would help 80 per cent of us). This then follows that we should have ability specific sessions, not only beginners but improvers as well as elite. Specific lower ratio coaching put in place. What a fantastic vision, but can we rely on goodwill alone to organise, lead and coach this grand plan? We have a turnover of a small business; the coaches certainly clock up enough hours for several full time jobs. We have a sound financial base to move forward, but do we have the members, committee and coaches goodwill to step up to the mark? There will be a push for more coaches in the very near future. The club will help and finance coaching qualifications; the wider the burden is spread the easier it is. We can move forward, but the question is this...

Do we want a small friendly club with limited members or do we all step forward to help, with a business-like structure and support to achieve the expanding vision?

Ian

Club Chair

**Training weekend** 1st-2nd May

The training weekend for me was hopefully going to be a good weekend where I got more training than a normal weekend and picked up some top tri tips from the pros. I'm fairly new to triathlon and have been doing one or two a year for the last few years at super sprint distance and stepped up to sprint distances last year. I'm not your normal athlete build wise but like the challenge of it all.

I'm new to the club and went to a couple of coached swim sessions a while back to find that I can't really swim and need to really work on the technique (I'll come back to this in a minute).

The first morning started off with a run session on the track so my big bowl of porridge just before arriving wasn't the wisest breakfast choice. I did wonder what you could learn from a track session about technique. The answer – everything!

OK so as I mentioned above my swim technique needed work, but now I was being told I needed to learn how to run again too. The logic of it made lots of sense and we were all soon 'falling' off the start line into our new run technique and thinking all the time we ran about our body position and leg lift technique.

The second session before we had our lunch was a turbo session. This was my first time on a turbo and I had to borrow one of the clubs for it. This session turned out to be a very good session that built up to the main session before working down to the cool down. It was a great practical session that taught us how to structure any training session to get the most from it.

After a lunch stop to refuel we headed for the pool for a long swim session. This turned out to be very different too as I already knew my technique needed work but Peter and Harry said we needed to rethink our technique. But luckily they didn't turn it into a complex process and kept it nice and simple.

All in all, the first day was a real eye opener for me and was looking forward to the next day.

## **DAY TWO**

We had a prompt start at 9am in the pouring rain ready for a 50km bike ride. I don't get much time to train and get out on the bike for that distance and only really train to a maximum of 20km (my race distance). The ride was quite tough for me personally with strong head winds and the rain making it hard in the cold. We were quickly taught how to ride in a pack and I found it quite tricky (and scary) to be so close to the bike in front and not being allowed to touch my brakes.

It was now back in the pool to work on swim technique and learn about sighting, buoy turns and drafting. This may seem pretty standard stuff to lots of you but for a novice they all made good sense and were great tips. (though I think the pre-Blenheim swims were very useful and I learnt about 'Crocodile eyes' which is great for when it's not too choppy and is much easier than lifting myself out of the water to sight).

Finally it was out to the track to learn about pacing. Now it seems pretty simple to try to run a set distance in a set time (you'd think) but this wasn't the case as everyone proved. Once we worked out our race times we all set out to learn about sticking to our pace and not heading off too quickly.

So from a novice point of view (and the more experienced amongst us that attended) it was a great weekend where I took away loads of very good practical tips that I've tried putting into practice during my recent training program (for Blenheim). If there is another one next year I'd highly recommend it to anyone of any standard and I'll be there again too!!

**Daniel Essen**

## Training weekend continued...

### DAY ONE

The weekend started with a 9.30am meet at Radley, where we met our two coaches for the day (Pete Freedman and Harry Wiltshire). Our first session was on the track, where we looked at running technique and style. Harry had us all hopping around with the intent of helping us experience how changing stance and foot plant was more efficient. To end, we all had to run 400m as quick as we could (aiming for a 1.17 lap). Amazingly, this is the pace at which Paula Radcliffe runs a marathon in!

Soon after the track session, we were in the hall completing a high intensity turbo session which was useful and well-structured. Following that, we had a mini strength and conditioning session, where we looked at relevant and exercises that would benefit a triathlete. Again, very useful.

After lunch, we had an open water swim discussion, then went into the pool for a hard session consisting of practising sighting, drafting, buoy dodging, a 16 x 50m swim, group swims where we replicated a shoal of whales. All in all, a tiring and brilliant day, where we had the opportunity to pick the coaches' brains throughout the day.

### DAY TWO

The weather was certainly not on our side – it was windy, raining and very cold! Our guest appearance, Jodie Swallow, led one group out on a two hour ride, and Pete also took another group. It was here that I personally learnt the benefit of cycling in a pack as I often found that being on the end was hard work and I was easily dropped. I also learned that Jodie is as hardcore as she is strong. She didn't stand any nonsense, and cycled in shorts. (Brrr!!) After we all returned, got dry and had some well deserved refreshments, we had a discussion on tapering. Again, we all had a chance to ask lots of questions about anything we wanted.

After lunch, we were back in the pool, where we had personal coaching! This was awesome and unbelievably useful. We still managed to get thrashed and all came away having worked hard, with some useful tips about our technique.

To end the weekend, we were back on the track, and ran 5km worth of interval training (1km, 400ms and 200ms). We were all extremely tired but I was really impressed with the effort that everyone made.

I'd like to say a huge thank you to everyone who attended and made this possible, and an even bigger thank you to the club who allowed all this to go ahead. I can't wait to plan the next one!!

**Steph Page**

## **My Ironman experience** Nice, France

It all started about a year ago. I was 17 stone, heavily overweight and I thought 'exercising' every day. Well to be honest, looking back at it, the 'exercise' I was doing around that time consisted of spending half an hour in the weights room, bench pressing 100kg and talking about beer and burgers. No wonder I gained weight quicker than I could lose it. Ah well, sometimes it needs a bit of a 'thing' to wake up and to start thinking about what I really wanted to do at the age of 24/25.

That happened around June, when my ex-girlfriend decided to break up with me, seven hours before we should have gone on a luxurious trip to Rome for her birthday. Since I was pretty gutted that something like that could happen out of absolutely nothing I cancelled the trip and bought my first road bike. I can still remember my first trip of 14 miles around Oxford which included ladder hill in Wheatley after which I almost wanted to dump the bike in the Isis! Nevertheless I kept on cycling and noticed that my weight was going down seriously quickly.

Five months later I had lost 5 stone (down to 12 stone) and felt fit as ever! A colleague and endurance athlete at Oxford Brookes University joked about me signing up for an Ironman since he fancied doing one. I never even heard about an Ironman but I decided to be stupid and signed up before even looking up what an Ironman included. You can imagine that I was shocked when I found out that it meant that I had to go through a 2.4 mile swim, 112 mile bike ride and a full marathon run in one go! I tried to explain my mum what it was all about, but my parents thought I was joking around for about a month. I had never run a marathon, and around that time I was only able to run for about ten minutes at a slow, slow pace!

Training began but I didn't have a clue where to start, so I kept on cycling, and started running for the first time in my life! I can still remember sending an email to Claire for membership details saying: "you can ride on the road, you can run on the road, but you need a swimming pool for the swim... Can I please come and have a look?". So I did and joined OxfordTri straight away! Good bunch of people, helpful, friendly, open, kind and I felt at home straight away.

Now a few months later and I've just finished my first triathlon ever! I'm well chuffed that I managed to do my first 2.4 mile swim (in one go) in 1 hour and 7 minutes, followed by a hilly 112 mile bike ride (I'm Dutch and not used to hills) in 6 hours and 13 minutes, followed by my first marathon EVER in 5 hours and 17 minutes! Including transition times it comes down to 12 hours and 58 minutes. So now, I'm part of OxfordTri with triathlete status!

So, how was the Ironman? Well the best way to compare the swim is like a washing machine. Legs, arms, feet, fists, goggles, wetsuits are being kicked around, hit, smashed and pulled off for the first 20-30 minutes. I assumed it would be bad, but with 3,000 people in the water at the same time, it's inevitable that you're going to get kicked or punched if you want to set a fast time down. It felt amazing though when I got out of the water and I saw my finishing time which was about ten minutes faster than I originally was hoping for.

T1 was a bit confusing. Never having done a triathlon before I was pretty upset with the volunteer who only tried to be helpful by emptying my transition bag upside down onto the chair next to me, after which he started pulling on my wetsuit and looked at me as if I was some idiot who couldn't get his wetsuit of himself. After telling him 4 times that "I WAS ALRIGHT" he backed off and started to 'help' someone else. Now afterwards I realised that it was all meant in a good way, but I was just not used to it.

Then the bike course followed. I almost made the classic mistake about getting on the bike within the transition area. Luckily the marshal pulled me off before I could swing my leg over the saddle which was a realisation for me to pay good attention to the rules. Setting off I felt fresh, awake with good strong legs so I concluded that my taper actually worked! I felt ready to conquer the Alps which start about 20km into the 180km ride! First hill (10% over 500m) was hard work, so many people around you, one fault and it would be like domino-D-day where everyone would fall over. Second climb was a long one (3.5-7% over 20km) which took me just over an hour to conquer. The descents were lethal, but oh-so-much-fun! Leaning in the corners where you can just about kiss the tarmac flying past with 50mph! I clocked a maximum speed of 51.4mph on the way down. The last 20km on the straight along the Promenade the Anglais was beautiful! Around 30°C in heat with minimal wind but no shade was a HOT experience!

Then T2 came around. The sudden realisation that the fun bit has gone, and that the fat-boy from last year still needed to run a marathon. T2 took me 12 minutes to get myself motivated to run the marathon. The idea of running out of T2 and seeing the finisher of that year finish (8 hours and 27 minutes) breaking the IM Nice record wasn't really helping.

The first 5 km went rather alright, but at the turning point (IM Nice run four laps along the beach) my body screamed and begged me to stop. Stupidly enough I listened to my body and had a 2 minute standing rest. This was the biggest mistake so far. My legs were knackered, lactate was at the highest level ever, glycogen was gone and Patrick was tired. I started to combine slow walks with jogs in between the aid stations. However I still have to admit that the marathon time was 5 hours and 17 minutes. I could have done so much better but my legs just didn't want to move anymore.

But all that was forgotten on the last lap, the final 300m where the crowd is cheering, your name is called out, and the sentence: "Patrick from the Netherlands, You're an IRONMAN" is something I'll never forget!

Overall this has been an amazing experience for me. I'm recovering really fast, and might even see you guys on the next bike ride. But till then I'll be enjoying the memories that nobody can ever take away from me. Furthermore I'm wondering: "should I do another IRONMAN next year?????" now that's the question on which I'm going to end the story.

Cheers guys for all the good times so far in OxfordTri! Let's hope there are many other joyful moments in the making for all of us!

**Patrick Esser**

## Diary of a novice triathlete Part 2

**An occasional (and occasionally truthful) record of my preparation for my first triathlon**

One of the great things about being self-unemployed is that I can go to the gym during the day and one of the great things about this is that at midday they show 'Aerobics-Oz Style' on the big TV. This consists of half a dozen Australian beach-babes exercising on what looks like a helipad beside Sydney Harbour (I assume they are Australian; I can't hear their accents). Inspiring stuff and pretty soon I'm skipping along on the treadmill watching Laura, Julie, Mia and the rest of the gang doing their thing. My wife mouthed something to me from a nearby cross-trainer so I slipped out one earphone and cupped my ear. "Stop dribbling" she said. "I'm looking for tips for the Pilates class" I replied. She smiled pityingly and I went back to trying to run while looking upwards and not falling off. "I too can have a body like that" I lied to myself and glanced down to see how far I had gone. Only 150 metres since I last looked - that can't be right.

Going to the gym is necessary but not sufficient and so the time had come to introduce swim sessions into my routine. The first issue to be addressed was, of course, what to wear. I laid out the options on the bed and contemplated them critically. Do I go with:

**Option A** - The board shorts that made me look so hot / cool /middle-aged (delete as appropriate) on holiday last year.

**Option B** - The "ta-dahs!" aka Speedos. If you don't know why they are called ta-dahs, watch the movie Blue Crush. This is a pretty average surfer-chick movie but with one immortal scene, the "ta-dah" moment.

**Option C** - The plain, dark blue, middle-sized, ordinary trunks. These are the pool equivalent of what you would wear on a dress-down Friday in a new job.

I went with the dress-down Fridays. Now, goggles: we must have half a dozen pairs of goggles somewhere. Half an hour's rooting around in draws found the nest where they were hibernating and I was all set

I also decided that my trusty old bike, even if I took the basket off the front, was probably not the right machine for triathlon. And so, after some internet research, I ordered *Expensive New Bike*. After a few days it arrived in a vast cardboard box. I unpacked it like a ..., well, like a kid getting a new bike. I gazed at its sleek beauty. Then I noticed something: all that money and it didn't even come with pedals. A quick trip to the local bike shop and I was equipped with a pair of clipless pedals and shoes. The shoes made me walk like granny and the pedals looked like miniature alien spacecraft. I eyed them suspiciously. They gazed back innocently. "We are very easy to use", they mimed (because, of course, pedals can't speak), "and won't cause you to fall off in front of a lorry at the first junction."

I am unconvinced but fitted them to *Expensive New Bike* anyway and set off for my inaugural ride. We reached a roundabout and, as I slowed to a halt, they screamed, "Die, earthling scum!" (it turns out they can speak) and threw me onto the tarmac.

Fortunately their evil plan failed because there was no lorry coming the other way. I sorted myself out and pedalled carefully home without clipping in. Then I had a brainwave: I transferred the pedals to my old hybrid and took them out on a nearby playing field to practise. It was now even more like being a kid with a new bicycle; all I needed was my Dad running behind me holding the saddle. After a while I managed to sign an inter-galactic peace agreement with the pedals. Interestingly, there are slightly different clauses for each of them. The left pedal retains the right occasionally not to let go, based on a complex religious calendar from its home planet. The right one retains the right to not clip in properly in the first place, based on when it feels like it. However, we made enough progress for me to put them back on *Expensive New Bike* and soon the back roads of Oxfordshire were whizzing past. No more driving to the gym for me.

### Pre-Blenheim swims



## Diary of a novice triathlete Part 3

**An occasional (and occasionally truthful) record of my preparation for my first triathlon**

*Warning: this instalment includes some scenes of a distressing nature and those with a sensitive disposition should look away. Those who are interested to know what can happen to A Gentleman's Sensitive Parts when he starts cycling long distances should read on.*

Disaster! I timed my visit to the gym, as usual, to coincide with Aerobics Oz Style on the TV, only to find that Mia Baker had dyed her hair brown, the two-timing cow. Either that or I misremembered her name. Anyway, the Oz Aerobics ladies are now out of my life. This is not because they recorded the programme years ago on the other side of the world and are out of my league anyway. No, that has *nothing* to do with it. The reason is that, having broken the 2 km barrier on the treadmill I felt confident to run, or jog, on the road. Do I run or do I jog? I used to reckon that anything faster than a 10-minute mile pace counted as running: 10 or longer was jogging. Translated into metric that means the cut-off rate is 6.213711922 minutes per kilometre, or one thigh-burn and half an abdominal series if you are watching Aerobics Oz Style.

A slightly larger problem than the colour of Mia's hair came to light on the third outing on *Expensive New Bike*. It was all going rather well and so, while free-wheeling down a hill, I stood up on the pedals to scratch my balls and THEY WEREN'T THERE! I pulled over to double-check, not that the symptoms are easy to mistake. Nothing. Then, thank goodness, pins and needles (and it is not often you will find a chap being grateful for pins and needles in his testicles). I turned around, cycled carefully home and explained the symptoms to my wife. She was initially sympathetic so I suggested that a massage might speed recovery, but apparently I was on my own there. Later in the week, in the pub, I raised the subject with a friend who is both a cyclist and a GP. He gave me that special

look that doctors reserve for friends who describe their symptoms in the pub and said, "No idea, I've never had that problem."

"Wrong answer." I screamed, "You are supposed to say it's a common problem and terribly easy to solve." People in the pub looked at me curiously.

"Try Googling it." suggested this digital immigrant and so later that evening I closed the door to the office, tightened my pop-up blocker a couple of notches and started searching. Hurrah! Apparently it's a common problem that is terribly easy to solve. What I needed was a split-crotch saddle.



I rummaged around a bit more and found one recommended on a number of websites. It had: “several Elastomer micro shock absorbers (patented)”, which sounded comfortable; “a perforated Italian leather cover”, which sounded beguiling; an “anatomic cut-out”, which must be some kind of switch; and, “sleek and aggressive styling”, which sounded rather off-putting. However, I do not plan to spend much time looking at it and so, although it was not cheap, I went ahead and ordered it. What with *Expensive New Bike*, Space Patrol Destroyer pedals, Split Crotch Saddle and pins and needles, a sex-change operation was starting to look like it might have been a cheaper and less painful option overall. If you are ever bored, try Googling “split crotch saddle”. I suggest you use your browser’s ‘incognito’ mode.

On my next trip to the swimming pool I found it being terrorised a Swamp Dragon - an old lady who thinks that anyone who is under 65, swims front crawl or wears goggles should not be allowed in the pool. If you splash her, you should be the subject of an ASBO. I avoided her attempts to turn me to stone by staring at me, completed my session in the guttering at the edge of the pool and then jogged, definitely jogged, home.

**Charlie Wilson**

### **Oxford Tri Sprint** Radley College, 30th August

Inspired by Charlie and want to give triathlon a go?

For the second year, Oxford Tri is hosting the Oxford Tri sprint triathlon at Radley College. Make sure you get yourself signed up as it’s a great, local event and completely bargainous (I don’t believe this word has made it into the Oxford corpus yet but it should!).

**Location:** Radley College

**Time:** First wave starts at 0800

**Prizes:** Yes. Prize giving at 1130 (or asap after the last finisher)

**Swim:** Up and down in a pool. 16 lengths = 400m. Ability to count to either eight or 16 is required.

**Bike:** Quiet course of approx 20km starting and finishing at Radley college.

**Run:** Scenic 5km run through mixed terrain run (grass, footpath, tarmac).

**Timing:** Chip timing provided by [www.stuweb.co.uk](http://www.stuweb.co.uk).

**Open to:** Everyone, especially novices, beginners and people near to oxford.

**Will there be cake?** Yes. At the end.

**Price:** £15 for Oxford Tri Members and £20 for non members.

For more details, please contact [oxfordtrirace@gmail.com](mailto:oxfordtrirace@gmail.com)

Here's the import bit – This race cannot go ahead without the considerable support of members from the club to help with set up on the Sunday and marshal on race day. Can you, your family or friends help? We need 40-50 volunteers to help make this race happen. Here are the roles we need help with:

### **Lead up**

Prepare race packs with numbers, stickers and other goodies. Purchase of refreshments and sundries.

### **Sunday**

General set up: direction signs on the cycle and run route and around the car park and transition. Setting out the pavilion for registration / refreshments.

### **Monday**

General set-up (very early) – Final set up of registration and finish area.

Car parking (early start) – directing competitors to the car parking area and assisting with general queries.

Transition marshals – help maintain good order in transition and keep things safe and fluid.

Swim (early start) – Lane counters and general directions. Collecting in cycle route signs.

Cycle route – To ensure competitors are shown the correct way to go, to offer encouragement and to note any violations / dangerous conduct. There are two compulsory foot-down turns in this year's race and we need very strong / loud characters at these marshalling points.

Run route – To ensure competitors are shown the correct way to go and to offer encouragement.

Finish area – To offer congratulations, move competitors through the area and keep the drinks topped up.

Registration (early start) – to hand out race packs and help with competitors' questions.

Refreshments – Making drinks and serving cakes in the pavilion / registration area, during and after the event.

Cake making – it would be very much appreciated if we could have the same beautiful selection of home-made cakes as last year to serve with refreshments after the race.

You will be given much more information in the lead up to the race. We have a job description for each of the roles if you want to know more information.

Please can you email me if you can spare some time to help? If there is a particular job you would prefer to do please indicate that and I will do my best to accommodate you. The feedback we received from last year's race, both from competitors and marshals, was glowing. Let's try and aim to make this year's event an even better success. Without you this race cannot happen.

Claire Loades [claire@claireloades.co.uk](mailto:claire@claireloades.co.uk)