Dartford and whiteoak 30th triathlon – 9th June 2019

5am and the alarm sounds, I’m already awake thinking about what I have let myself in for, the White Oaks Triathlon, one of the oldest triathlon events in England and their 30th too.

Started the mornings ablutions and looked out the window to a beautiful early June summers day, blue sky and sunshine, it’s going to be a good day, I thought to myself. Julie, my wife and myself jumped in the van, loaded with the shiny new bike the night before and headed over to collect Luke my son, they are both giving me moral support for the sprint triathlon I have entered, I dipped my toe into the water two weeks prior with a Go Tri at White Oaks but this felt very different, more distance, more competitors and a much larger event.

As we drove to the venue we had loads of questions, what time would I start? How will I know where to go? Where do I leave my bag?

Entering the road to the event we saw a large yellow sign saying car park and a friendly smile from a man in a high viz jacket, I think it’s this way I said to my passengers and that was it we had arrived.

Registration next, I hadn’t pre booked online and was a bit concerned that they could say no but no problem payed my money, filled the form and of I went to check the bike in, this triathlon game is a doddle I thought.

I love swimming and for me the best bit of a triathlon is the swim but I started too quick and forgot to breath, half a length done and it dawned on me, “your not a fish Doug you need oxygen you idiot”, mixture of nerves and adrenalin had taken over, settle down breath and get back on track I thought.

The paddle entered the water saying “two lengths left” I’ve got this, up and back and I’m done, well this bit anyway.

Now to the bike, I very nice lady gave me clear instructions from poolside to transition,  “follow the red carpet” she said and so I did arriving at T1 and receiving more verbal support, “well done” “have a good ride”, and so I mounted the shiny new bike, after the line, of course, and began my road trip of 20k around the beautiful Kent countryside on what had turned into a bright and sunny morning.

I was a bit worried at first, the brain was doing its usual nonsense “this thing is new, and you haven’t tested it properly, what if the wheels fall off”. So, I ignored the grey matter and pushed on guided all the way round by the bright yellow signs and marshals waving me in the right direction and shouting “keep going” “well done”.

Legs aching and lungs well and truly tested I arrived back at transition, “RIDER ENTERING” someone shouted, they really seemed to have control of this, hundreds of people entering and leaving all morning but all without any problems.

And so, to the run, my worst part, but, what a touch the bike ride has made my legs numb so brain can’t give me excuses to stop because they hurt. So, get on with it, you have made it this far let’s finish this.

I have to say that although the running bit is the worst physically its not as lonely as the swim and bike, as I ran (ok plodded) along the way I passed fellow runners giving smiles, nods and the odd “well done” even a few encouraging remarks from the general public which all helped to moved me closer to that finish line.

I thought of my my Dad, who I sadly lost nine years ago at the end of this month and the times when I was young he would rub my legs at half time football matches and give me the half time talk to spur me on, I can do this, I thought, I can do this.

And so I did, I crossed the finished line, greeted like a vip a medal placed over my head and a banana handed to me, I felt as though I had won the London marathon, ok maybe not that good but special non the less, there was an almost carnival atmosphere at the finish and It was an experience that I will never forget, my first proper triathlon.

I would like to thank all of those involved in making this event possible, you really did a wonderful job organising, coordinating and executing the running of this event.

Doug Beesley