

## **Bedford Classic Triathlon, 24 August 2007 (Race Report)**

**Phil Joyce**

I'd decided about a year earlier to have a go at a triathlon for charity having no special desire to do a marathon like everyone else. I did my internet research and bought the kit and planned to do some sprints as practices. Warwickshire 07, Stratford 08, Bedford Box End 08.

I planned to check in the day before (Saturday) then camp overnight to be ready bright and early. After checking in, we checked out the "campsite" which was not to my wife's liking. A car park about 200m from the circus which was in town. After narrowly avoiding an expensive hotel room I secured short notice place on the floor of my mate's flat in Northampton at the cost of a few beers.

I was awoken by the sound of heavy rain. I was cursing the weather all the way and my one supporter wasn't too chuffed either.

Having arrived a little late, I squeezed into a transition slot and listened to the race briefing. The main points seemed to be, "don't fall off at the first roundabout" and remember the "one foot down" stop in Ickwell. Feeling more worried about my cooling body than nervous, I donned my wetsuit and tried not to look too much like an amateur.

As I was in the third wave, I had the chance to watch a start from the butterfly bridge and decided to keep well away from the front in my wave. Next was the women's wave, so I thought at least I won't have the embarrassment of the girls overtaking me. I met up with Johnny Nicol and Richard Jeggo in the marshalling area then nervously climbed into the surprisingly warm waters of the Ouse for a bit of a paddle and warm up.

The open water swim start was a bit hectic, more crowded than I'd experienced at the Box End lake a month earlier. As planned I started just back from the start and was pleased to find that I was actually passing people, rubbing the odd shoulder on the way. I'd rowed this stretch of water several times before, it had always seemed a lot shorter in boat. I kept plodding along, occasionally changing sides for breathing and tucked in behind a pair of similarly steady paced feet. Almost surprised that I'd reached it, I dawdled around the half way buoy and received a knock to the face from a pair of feet. My nose clip came off but I'd learnt from my mistake at King Lear's Lake and tied it to my goggles. I just can't seem to swim without inhaling water through my nose. The second half went OK until about 100m from the end a badly timed breath coincided with another swimmers kick and a part inhaled part swallowed a lung full of water. I must have stopped for about 10 seconds under the suspension bridge coughing and choking before swimming to the finish to be dragged out by the helpful marshals. 32 minutes by my watch, I was pleased with that.

Having experienced the "T1 wobbles" before, I stripped the top half of my wetsuit first and put on my top and Camelback before standing on one leg to remove the bottom half, then on to cycle mount line. I like the Bedford course, not too hilly, and a full 40km lap rather than the 2 laps of a 20K which some events run. One of the reasons I'd chosen this event. After only a few Km I recognised the disgruntled face

of a Jeggo, wheeling his ride back down the course, evidently with a puncture. He'd told me he was aiming for a time about 30 minutes faster than mine. The one foot down stop caught me unawares as I was chasing down another rider who had passed me and I ended up starting in too high a gear. Coming back into Bedford on the main road I passed a competitor arguing with Police Officer, I gather his race had finished early due to a roundabout misdemeanour. I wondered if the police car had been sitting waiting for someone to put a foot (or wheel) wrong. With still a couple of miles to go, I passed a pointy helmeted man running with a bike in a pair of knee length white socks. I recognised as I passed that this was Johnny, also with a puncture, and running shoeless to finish regardless. I guess that's the Iron Man mentality. Well done to my £360 on ebay bike I thought, at least the tyres held up. And on to T2, I calculated that I should easily break my target of 2hr45min with a bike time of 1hr19min. The run is definitely my worst part of the triathlon, I blame my disproportionately short legs. Despite all the advice, I had not concentrated on my weaker sports in training and as one by one the pensioners passed me, I planned to improve this for next year. Run time 52minutes and completion within my target of 2hr45min, I'd also raised over £350 for Kidney Research UK. (open for donations until 24Oct08 [www.justgiving.com/pjbedfordtri](http://www.justgiving.com/pjbedfordtri)). The Bedford Classic is a well organised event (google galeforce events) in nice surroundings and I think a good first time Olympic Distance course. I'm planning on entering again next year and aiming to beat my age group's average time of 2hr38.

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