

## **Race Report for Ironman Austria – 13<sup>th</sup> July 2008 by Johnny Nicol**

I arrived in Austria the week before the race and so managed to get to ride part of the bike route, have a few runs and swims in the river and the lake. The place is absolutely stunning and I would love to go back there for another holiday or to watch the race (and maybe to race there again in a few years!).

The race still did not feel real to me until a few days before when more and more people arrived and the Ironman village was open. There was a real buzz around the place and as our hotel was on the bike route, there were hundreds of people flying past every day who my little boy Jacob loved shouting “bike” at and pointing at every one.

Race morning came and off I went down to check the bike and get ready for the swim start. I still didn't feel nervous and was really looking forward to the start. Bike sorted, wetsuit on, what have I forgotten? Kiss the wife and boy! The only problem was that there were 2400 people racing and what seemed like just as many people spectating. How on earth would I find them? Luckily as I went down to the beach I spotted Laura climbing up on something trying to see me. Quick kisses for the wife and Jacob and off I went to get my place for the swim. Before I knew it the gun had gone off and everybody was charging into the water. Arms and legs everywhere but I got into a nice steady rhythm and found some feet to follow. Before I know it we were leaving the lake and down the canal for the final 900m, this got a little rough and I got a couple of bashes to the head. The crowds had gathered down the canal to see the swim exit and were giving loads of support.

Out of the water and a quick look at my watch, 1:10. Fantastic, just under what I had expected. Quick transition and out onto the bike which I was looking forward to. There were loads of people heading out on the bike and I had to remind myself not to push too hard as it was going to be a long day. The first 10-15 miles are very quick, even without pushing hard, and it was still dry although the forecast was for rain. It didn't take long for the rain to come but it wasn't cold at this point. I followed my nutrition plan and felt really good passing through the halfway point at about 2 hours 46 mins (again the roads were lined with supporters and the pom pom girls were there too which was nice). At the beginning of each lap I went past my hotel where my dad was stood waiting for me cheering me on and waving his walking stick in the air which I enjoyed, my dad has never seen me race and I could tell how proud he was feeling.

There are two main climbs each lap which were tough but so well supported (they bus people to the top and have music playing which is great as you are riding up tour de france style). The rain came down quite heavy on the second lap and the thunder and lightning started (loudest I have ever heard) and I got a little cold. I slowed up a bit for the second lap thinking about the run and wanting to leave plenty in the tank. I finished the bike in a total time of 5.40 with an average speed of 31.75kmph.

Another decent transition and, running shoes on and I was heading out for the run. Quick toilet break I thought as I had *needs* from early on in the bike, it wasn't quick but off I went on the run through a series of turns and bends around the Ironman village all with loads of spectators shouting your name which was cool, then I saw Laura jumping up and down with her rain coat on and broolly in hand looking very excited. The first 12.1 km went by in a time of 68.15, which was on target time even though I had stopped for another toilet break. The rain was still coming down hard which made me laugh as people took sponges at aid stations to squeeze on their head, why? The next 9.4km took 1.04.40 along with a couple more toilet stops, this was a little worrying as anything I tried to take on at aid stations was going straight through me and I was getting bad stomach pains and cramps.

About 4km into the second lap and I was in real pain and had to wait for a toilet to become free and then took over it for a while, when I emerged I just couldn't run. I tried walking for a few hundred metres and running again but my stomach was having none of it, after a couple of attempts at running and failing I decided that I would just have to try and walk at a decent pace. I also decided that I would not take anything else on at the aid stations apart from little sips of water to try and settle my stomach. My next 11km took over an hour and a half and I was gutted as my legs felt pretty good but every time I tried to run I was doubled over in pain. The rain had also stopped at this point and the sun came out making it really hot for a while. I managed to slow jog/walk the final 10km with a few more stops and finished the run in a time of 4.51.

As I rounded the bend into the finishing straight I spotted my Mum, Dad, Laura and Jacob. I gave Laura a kiss and she passed my little boy over. I carried Jacob down the finish straight soaking up all the cheers and feeling a little emotional. I crossed the line in a total time of 11.52.23 in 1480<sup>th</sup> place and 156<sup>th</sup> in my age group. I walked round the corner to see the others, gave Mum and Dad a hug (I told my dad I was happy he was there to see me and he had to walk away as he was very emotional. There was a chance he wouldn't be able to come as he had a serious car accident about a month before) I hugged Laura and then passed Jacob back to her and sat on the floor, managing to smile for a couple of photos. Wow it felt good to be sitting down!

All in all it was an amazing experience and a great race which I am sure I will do again one day. As for now I am enjoying a bit of down time before the club relays.