



## Race Report



### World Long Distance Championships Bob Thomas – 1<sup>st</sup> Paratri 1

#### Race Report LD World Championship – Bob Thomas

What a day to do a tri! Little did I know this was going to be a test for the *“Mind, Body and Soul”!*

#### The Swim:

Everything is going to plan, get the prothesis and sleeve on my legs, which is part of my wetsuit setup. Get carried down to the bottom of the steps, Andrew’s already out at the start line for the

swim, my transponder hasn't registered, they take it off to go and swipe it over the mat. Time is starting to get close to the gun, I am still sitting on the end of the steps waiting for my chip to come back, finally it's back on my leg and only a couple of minutes to go. Swimming out to the start buoy and bang, an elite female doing her warm up, swims into me head-on almost knocking me out and with her head pushing my goggles deep into my right eye socket! Spent precious moments before our start trying to get my goggles right and stop them from leaking!

The gun goes and started swimming into the worse conditions I have ever had with goggles leaking, sore eye socket and a little puffed up bottom lip. My legs, though together and up close to the surface were like icy pole sticks getting thrown all over the place with the strong Easterly whipping up big chop making it very difficult to hold any form and at the same time getting an absolute pounding in the head from the chop like I was in the boxing ring with Mike Tyson. Only thing different at this point swimming towards the causeway, I didn't get my ears chewed off but instead of that, drank so much of that muddy foul water I got a sore throat bringing it back up. I had to stop so many times to bring up that water because every time I went to see where the buoys were I got a mouth full! I was starting to wonder where and when am I going to get to those turning buoys! The 1.2k on the way back was a bit mind boggling as I seemed to be getting no where. I could finally see the turning buoy to finish the swim but unfortunately about 300m from the end I got a smack in the jaw by someone's foot swimming past and out fly my part dentures, I get one chance to grab them but to no avail they disappear into the muddy depths of the Swan River! So anyway, finally get out of the water absolutely "SPENT" looking like a gummy shark and my wife Jenny saying *where's your teeth* and I said in the river! The time it took to swim the 3k I can usually swim 4k!

### **The Bike Leg:**

Usually I am quite strong on the bike, but with a swim like it was, I came out of the water with not much left in the tank and found it very energy sapping with the strong head and crosswinds generated by the easterly. Having the Freeway was great but was very exposed to the elements as mentioned and it felt like I was having a sauna due to the heat coming off the freeway surface. This, as I have done on a few other occasions, basically had to put myself into survival mode and just concentrate on making sure I kept inside the bike cut which I did and for the first time since 1998 doing tri's as an AWAD, I got my first yellow card for riding too wide. The reason I go wide at times is I get a bit paranoid with that word that starts with the letter "P"!

### **The Run:**

Anyway I finally get out on the run leg with the wind dropping and the temperature rising, did the first of 4 laps a bit slow but gradually got the technique going and did the run leg in about 1:18hr. At one time going over one of the board walks. I called out to a French man "*coming through on your right*" and he shouted back in English "*get f\*\*\**". What I called to him must have sounded something abusive in French so I got a howdy do you do back in English!

Andrew racing in the Tri4 category and I have had some good tussles in the past, managed to pass him twice on the run leg and others three times as it got very hot and a large number of competitors were walking. Andrew and I were in our respective category this time so it didn't matter who got line honours but all the same Andrew handled the water a little better than me and came in 15 minutes ahead at the finish saying to me later, this was a real character builder!

I must congratulate the ITU, TA, TWA, Trievents and volunteers and to not forget the commentators, all for a magnificent job in supporting and running an important event! My only other hiccup was getting onto the lawn from the road in my trackchair having to need assistance to negotiate a very steep curb to get over to get to the finish line.

One thing that did amaze me for an event like this, was the lack of competitors in the Para Triathlete categories! In recognition as a disabled athlete I thank the ITU in continuing to recognise physically challenged athletes.

Doing a world championship race I expected competition but that was not to be. I guess if there are only about 40 para triathletes in the world and most of them doing Kona only a couple of weeks beforehand, it would be expected the numbers would be low!

Having said that, I was there to get on the podium after finishing one of the toughest events in the world and was presented the Gold Medal for the Tri1 category by a great triathlete "Craig Alexander" two time winner of the Hawaiian Ironman 2008 and 2009.