



## **Race Report – Ironman Japan 2009 By Courtney Ogden (2<sup>nd</sup> Place)**

I have to say the race didn't go quite to plan.

The warm and very humid conditions took me by surprise, and, as I had only two days in Japan prior to the race, presented some nutritional challenges.

There were no surprises in the swim for me from a performance perspective. Unless I am doing a ridiculous amount of swimming, the general plan is to hold onto the lead group for as long as possible. In a large field, I can generally stay with the lead pack for the duration of the swim. However, in a smaller field, like that gathered in Japan, this presents more of a challenge. On this occasion, I wasn't able to hold onto the top five athletes for any amount of time and watched them swim off into the distance right from the start. In this situation, the hope is that there are some intermediate swimmers in the field to swim with and I got lucky this time. There was one Japanese competitor in this category and I swam on his feet for 95% of the swim distance. Don't get me wrong, if I have to swim by myself, I have trained to do so, but it is better to be able to save the energy if possible.

I exited the water in 7th place, just under 4 minutes behind the lead group, made up one place in T1, and passed another competitor to move into 5th position at about the 30km point of the cycle leg. I did close to about two minutes behind the leading group of four at around 70km into the cycle leg, but that was as close as I got to the leading two athletes. After this point, the gap increased for the rest of the cycle leg and I entered T2 approximately 8.30 behind Luke McKenzie, and 8.00 behind Cameron Watt, the main protagonists in the leading group of four. The other two involved in the leading group, Kieran Doe and Tim Marr, from all reports, popped at about the 140km mark. As a result, I passed Tim with about 2km left to cycle and was in T2 at virtually the same time as Kieran. Kieran pulled the pin on his day at about 2 kilometres into the run.

I don't get too upset about groups forming at the front of the race anymore as, if I was in that situation, I would be doing exactly the same thing. These race tactics are probably not 100% in line with the spirit of the sport, but that is just the way it is unfortunately. The moral of the story is to either swim more so it is possible to take part in the front pack bonanza, or choose races where packs are unlikely to form. There are enough options to satisfy just about everyone.

The run was the story of the day for me. I didn't realise it at the time, but I was somewhat dehydrated when I started the run leg. I weighed myself at the end of the race (after about 2 hours of lying on my back in the medical area) and was close to 5kg lighter than I was when I started. No wonder I didn't feel very good for the majority of the run. I felt I was drinking enough on the cycle leg, but clearly I wasn't. While not feeling great at the start of the run, the rot had not totally set in and I was able to move reasonably well for approximately 8km. I had a very bad patch between 8km and 12km before coming good for about 3km at the end of which I moved passed Cameron into 2nd place. Immediately I had another bad patch, had to walk, and Cameron repassed me.

It was at this point where I needed to give myself a stern talking to! You can imagine what was coming out of my mouth. In this situation I think about those people I am going to let down other than myself, and this always provides the impetus to toughen up and get my butt into gear. It took me until approximately the 21k point to muster up anything faster than a shuffle. At this point I felt reasonable again and repassed Cameron for the last time, but still felt compelled to stop at every aid station for the balance of the run. When I reached the 36km mark, the lights were starting to dim. At this point on the course there is a gradual uphill grade of approximately 1 kilometre, and it felt like I was running up stairs. The last 6km could best be described as survival and I was flummoxed that no one passed me in this time. Everyone must have been doing it tough out there.

The highlight of my day (apart from reaching the finish line) was running down the finish chute with my Japanese host family - the Inoue family. They went out of their way to make me feel comfortable and then thanked me for staying at their house - Incredible.

The immediate goal for this race was to finish in the top three and qualify for Hawaii. I am very happy that it all went to plan in that regard.



**Courtney Ogden (2<sup>nd</sup>) & Luke McKenzie (1<sup>st</sup>)**