



Race Report



World Long Distance Championships Loretta Wesley – World Age Group Champion 1st 45 - 49 age group

Perth Long Distance World Championships

When I first heard about the Long Distance World Championships coming to Perth last year, I thought it sounded too much like an ironman after I heard something about it starting with a 3km swim and wasn't interested in trying to qualify as I was just coming back into training from an injury which cut short my 2008/09 season and thought it would be too much for my body. Also I was just focussing on trying to qualify for the Gold Coast Worlds.

As last season progressed and I realised the distances weren't as harsh as I first imagined I thought I may have left it too late to try and qualify. Luckily my Busselton race was enough to get me on to the team.

I only had an easy week of training after the Gold Coast Worlds, but then came down with a cold which laid me off for a couple of days. I think my body needed that extra rest. The 6 weeks passed quickly and by the week prior I knew that race day could possibly be a shocker weatherwise, especially after our wet winter.

I enjoyed being involved with Australian team preliminaries and catching up with fellow West Aussie team mates.

I had my usual spaghetti pre-race evening meal and for brekky 2 bits of toast with jam, cup of tea and sports drink.

I surprisingly slept quite soundly the night before as I was pretty tired as life is always busy in our household.

I set up my things in transition and checked out the bike racks to see how far my age-group extended so I could get a good idea of how many people were in front by the end of my bike. I also noticed that 2 names I had picked out as strong rivals were not there, but knew it could still be anyone's race. I also finally decided due to the windy conditions to go for Plan B nutrition and took some gels in a flask in case I missed the sports drink in the bidon exchange. My husband Dale and my 2 older kids had come along to support me along with more relatives and friends, so it was great to be able to share this experience with them also.

I didn't want to get my wetsuit on too early as I knew I might get too hot, so kept check on my watch and planned it just right. Even though I applied sunblock I got pretty burnt. Better get the 8hr stuff next time!

I started off in Wave 4 (blue caps) with women up to 34 years and women 45 and over. I had been doing lots of river swimming in the recent couple of months and felt very much at home, even with the rough conditions. I had bumped up my swimming considerably over winter, just for this 3km swim! I wasn't able to hold on to the pack of faster swimmers up front but kept a good solid pace and kept them in sight for the first half, swimming a pretty straight line and passing a few from the wave in front. A handful of green caps (the rest of the women wave) also passed me along with quite a few yellow capped fast males. I knew it would be a long hard day, so didn't get into a panic as I knew I would have to run a good 20km at the end.

Out of the water in 53 mins when I looked at my watch, a bit slower than I expected, but conditions weren't good for a fast swim. I guzzled a quick gel then on to my bike. I was a bit nervous on the first lap with the gusty conditions but by the second lap felt more comfortable and was able to hold a steady pace and keep clear of other cyclists draft zones. From the course description, I was expecting the course to be a little longer each lap, so was pleasantly surprised and was lapping in around 35 mins. I heard lots of people cheering and was encouraged to stay focussed and strong.

At the end of the bike I glanced at my bike rack and noticed one bike, but on the second glance when leaving for the run the bike I noticed had a wetsuit thrown over it. I thought I was in the lead and that this was the only bike I saw and the person had withdrawn after the swim, but maybe they were a neat person and were already in the lead in front of me. I just had to run a good strong 20km and run my own race. I knew it would be hot.

I felt pretty average taking off, but was able to hold a steady pace grabbing fluids at every aid station. I grabbed a cup of ice, the first time I have ever been offered any, then didn't know what to do with it all, so just sucked on one piece and shoved the rest down my front. In the subsequent laps I tried some under my hat, but it felt like my hat was going

to come off, so decided to chuck the left over ice down my front again. I found I was overtaking many people and felt strong but was looking forward to it all being over as it was just such testing conditions. I found the drink stations becoming increasingly congested as the run progressed, so just called out for the drink I required and the aid station volunteers were fantastic handing it out to me on the outside. I definitely had to switch to coke near the end of the third lap. Usually I can get through a half without it, but today I really needed it. I told myself I was strong so the conditions shouldn't bother me too much. I was flattered by all the people cheering for me and tried to smile a bit even though I was hurting. I enjoyed the colourful supporters and those in fancy dress...I think that I did manage a smile then. I'm not usually very photogenic racing and have a few pretty ugly photos at home from me hurting! I was slowing down just a little each run lap and ran a bit slower than I had hoped, but knew it was okay for those conditions, running 1 hr 32 mins and finishing in 4hrs 51mins 12s secs with a "sprint" down the home stretch. I was thinking about the rest of the field still out there in those warm conditions that were getting hotter and was so glad to be home.

I was ecstatic to back up with another gold medal and feel very fortunate to be able to participate in both events with the support of my family. Thankyou to my training buddies, all those volunteers that helped out in the race, the spectators and other athletes with all that support and my coaches (I spread myself around).. Dave Scott, Stuart Durham (swim) and Raf Baugh (run).

I will need to take it a bit easier now and catch up with home life with my family and let Dale have some of his training mornings back.

Congratulations to all those other medal winners and participants. You are all winners.

Loretta Wesley.