

James Barry - IM 70.3 Elsinore 2022 Race Report

May 16, 2024

Struggling a bit with prep for 70.3 Youghal so I thought putting together a race report would help get me out of my funk!

Preparation

So the road to Elsinore started with Caitríona signing up, and me being concerned with us losing our couple of the year status (especially after seeing Peter and Sues pics) I decided to sign up as well!! Alan also got on board so a crew was forming. I did 70.3 Weymouth last September (2021) with the Brethern, Kevin, Sean, Alan and Conor so luckily I had a sense of what was ahead of me. Weymouth was unreal, a brilliant experience made better by doing it with the lads but with Covid the training was very hit and miss. We'd been in and out of lock down, no pools and we didn't think race would happen! The aim for that day was to get through the course which I happily did in 6 hrs 46 mins. Lots of lessons learned from Weymouth but I felt I'd unfinished business and wanted to get under 6hrs.

Once I signed for Elsinore I knew I needed a coach and I signed up with Cillian from Wattsup Studio. The main reason for choosing Cillian was my cycling definitely was my weakest and I'd heard great things about Cilians online programme and sessions, and anyone in the club who signed up with him only had positive things to say especially when it came to cycling progress. I'd also just started a new job in January so my routine was all over place so structured coaching was what I needed.

This was my first time using Training Peaks and found it brilliant. The plan was definitely intense and the hours racked up quite quickly! I kept going to the Monday track session led by Dave which I just found excellent and it brought my running on so much! These sessions are unreal and a great way to start off the week. I think it was one of these sessions that we started trying to convince others to jump on board and Sean's arm didn't need much twisting.

The club pool sessions with Danny and Sean Farrell really helped my technique so I'd a good mix of sessions and was also good to have sessions with other people. If you are in the club and haven't got to a swim session with either Danny or Sean you are missing out. It was one of these later sessions that Ciaran said he'd signed up so the crew was fully formed now!

Using technology and Training peaks and Zwift were brilliant and the way the sessions were structured definitely helped my cycling and when I had the chance to get to club sessions the company was much needed.

Generally the structure for my weeks were:

Monday (Swim, Run)

Tuesday (Turbo, Swim)

Wednesday (Run, Swim)

Thursday (Turbo, Swim)

Friday (Rest)

Saturday (Long cycle, Brick)

Sunday (Long Run)

I didn't always stay compliant with all the sessions but there's was flexibility there which was good!

Travelling over we'd to go with bike boxes which were grand but also a pain in the arse at times. I'd have paid anything to have the bikes collected and shipped over! Flights were grand considering it was the start of the hassles in airport and a bit of hassle when we landed in Denmark with trains not running but that added to excitement.

Caitríona had booked a deadly house for us which was central so we only had about a ten minute walk to the start. This made a big difference with calming the nerves. Now the parties on the street didn't help the sleep but the location made it perfect! Putting the bikes back together was an adventure and at the end there was a nut and bolt that no one claimed! We were able to go down to the swim course and Ironman tent to get all our bits sorted which was great. Seeing that amount of jelly fish was not!!! Atmosphere was electric in Race Village and seeing our names on different merchandise felt surreal!



Race day

Being so close made everything flow easier. Also they staggered the starts which meant you chose what time you got in rather than everyone together. This made it much easier and took pressure off. We'd seen all the jelly fish the previous evening so we knew what to expect that morning and Ironman had sent out messages that they weren't the dangerous ones! My aim was to get under 6 hrs. I knew this was a big jump from last year but I'd put the work in so that was the plan. The nerves were there but the atmosphere helps calm them and the other people around are sound and having a laugh!

Swim

Conditions were great except for jelly fish! The course was a weird W type course but I was excited for it. So in I hopped, took a few strokes and realised my goggles (which I'd just bought the previous week) started to fill with water. I didn't think much of it as I thought it was just from the jump in so I cleared them! And they filled again and again and again! They just wouldn't suction! Paddle boarder came over to me at one stage

as I was struggling so much. God love her I just shouted “I’ve trained so hard for this and they won’t work”.. Every now and again they’d suction but not for long. Thought a few times about giving up especially when some fella backstroked past me. Definitely thought there was no way I’d get under 6 now so felt deflated but said “fuck it I’ll enjoy the rest of it once I get out of water”. Hitting so much jelly fish was weird but you got used to it. Got through the swim in 49 mins which was actually 2 mins faster than Weymouth so that gave me a boost.

T1

Was a long enough run from end of water to bike but was a nice one, crowds were great, weather was good and I got to get a nice bit of nutrition (blocks and tailwind). T1 went well. 6 mins so knocked a minute off last years. The maths game had begun!

Bike

Don’t know what happened but I flew off on bike. Just got a second wind of energy! Roads were great, view along coast was amazing and had several pinch me moments of “fuck I’m lucky to do this”. Kept doing the maths on the bike and felt I was doing well and potentially I could make under 6 again which gave me a boost. Nutrition was blocks and tailwind! It’s always worked for me so didn’t change it! Grabbed a couple of the Ironman branded water bottles (which some fucker robbed). I could have done with drinking another bottle of water as was feeling effects of heat! Course was nice, nothing too steep and good roads! Came in at 3:08 so knocked 21 minutes off and definitely felt strong on most of it!

T2

Again no hassle with transition. Made sure to drink LOADS as it was hot!! 5 mins for T2 which was the same as last year but this time I’d bought an Ironman visor to put on! Surely this would make me run faster!!

Run

The run is generally my strongest and it’s where I can pick people off which is a good boost as it happens. This run was HOT and 3.5 loops around a castle. Doing the maths I wasn’t sure if I could keep under the 6 hrs as the legs were sore!! My head knew I could do it but wasn’t sure what the body would do! Running through Elsinore was class! Got to see Ciaran and Alan so that was a good boost to see the 3D heads and colors! Crowds were class and aid stations were plentiful! The run was a bit of a battle against the head, constantly doing the maths and alternating between “I’ve got this” and “I’m going to just miss it”. On 3rd lap I knew I could do it so picked up a bit of speed! Once I got around castle I knew I needed to pick it up more and all the Monday track sessions came back to me and I picked up speed knowing the pain would be gone soon! Came across the bridge and the feeling of knowing I was going to come in under the 6 hrs was immense! Now to get a good picture (Thanks to Kevin’s advice) cos my picture from last year was shite and to be fair we pay all that money for a good pic! So I clenched everything, sucked it all in and sprinted across the finish line and burst into floors of tears!!

Finished the run in 1:48 so shaved 25 minutes off! All the training, all the early mornings, all the sacrifices had been worth it! Finished on 5:57:50 so cut 48 mins off last year!! This felt good!!

It wasn't over yet!!

I had thought the excitement of the day was over but not yet! Thankfully I got to see Alan glide through the finish line while fixing his hair! I completed my first Tri in Athy with Alan in 2018, and we'd done Weymouth together so felt very surreal to be completing this together!!

I got to see Caitríona start off on the run course so we knew we'd be able to support her on the course. We met Sean and Ciaran who had absolutely smashed the course in a pub that was in the middle of the run so we pitched up, got some drinks and moved to cheering everyone on mode!! The day was just getting hotter and you could see the pain this was bringing to people! With 4 of the crew home our attention turned to superwoman Caitríona! Myself and Alan decided to head back to the finish line as it meant we'd see her a few times! Well lads the nerves weren't able for it! She'll tell ya the story herself but I've never shouted or cheered someone on more in my entire life!! Seeing her cross the finish line was a special moment and she was the superstar of the trip!!



Lessons learned

- Now I'm not sure if I've told you all but I'm bald. So this means I rarely wear a swim hat. So my new goggles were sea swimming ones which came up a bit on forehead but I'd never worn a swimming hat with them. So after a chat with the lads it now appears the hat stopped the suction so a harsh and valuable lesson learned here.
- Go with a group! The 3D crews in both races were just brilliant, such craic, such camaraderie, and lifelong memories made!

- Stay an extra night. We headed off ASAP in Weymouth but decided to do an extra night in Copenhagen! This was great as you could just relax and dissect it all together and go for nice food and even some rollercoasters if they are around!!
- For me getting a coach was crucial. Cillian was brilliant, encouraging, full of advice and always knew when to text to check in!
- Budget well. It's ironMan so the costs keep coming!
- Try stick with some club sessions as the company is needed. The coaches in the club are amazing and the advice and encouragement you get from 3D club mates is invaluable! Even though there was only 5 of us over there you knew you had the club supporting you from afar!
- Book a race where the bikes can be shipped directly to and even though YouTube videos of "how to take a bike apart" look easy that's not always true.
- Enjoy it and take lots of pics!! We're part of a very small group of people in this world who get to do what we do! We're the lucky ones!



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