

ISOMAN

TRIATHLON EVOLVED

Harder than Ironman Better than Ironman Fairer than Ironman



A friend of my brother...

During 2014 my brother mentioned a mate of his was planning a radically new triathlon event. It was going to be the first of its kind, a complete re-think of triathlon and an opportunity to be "there at the beginning". The distances seemed a bit peculiar but also a real challenge, and since it was relatively local I thought why not! Another plus point was the much reduced entry fee (£141 for 2016 entry) and no waiting up till midnight to try and enter in the 10 minute window before the race fills like some Ironman races.

"Most triathlon events are biased mainly towards the cycling and to a slightly lesser extent towards the running. Iron distance pros for example will spend only 10% of the total time swimming, 54% of the time cycling and 36% of the time running. The aim of Isoman is to address this imbalance and create a triathlon for which all disciplines demand an equal level of excellence.

Isoman



Training re-think

For *normal* Ironman training I would swim 4k twice a week, as soon as the lake was warm enough, but my main training effort would be biking 80 - 100 mile and running off the back of the long bike.

So a 60 mile bike seemed so much easier and much less of my weekend. The swim of 7 mile however, felt quite daunting in both the distance and finding the opportunity to put that much time in during the limited swim slots available.

Neutralised transition?

Apart from the change in distances the other peculiarity of Isoman is its attitude to transitions. They want to focus on the 3 disciplines and not your ability to get changed quickly. This also has the advantage of making it a bit safer in T1 when you emerge after a 3h+ swim with no blood in your legs. Plus in the future it should make comparing different races easier and allow organisers a bit more flexibility in where they site events.

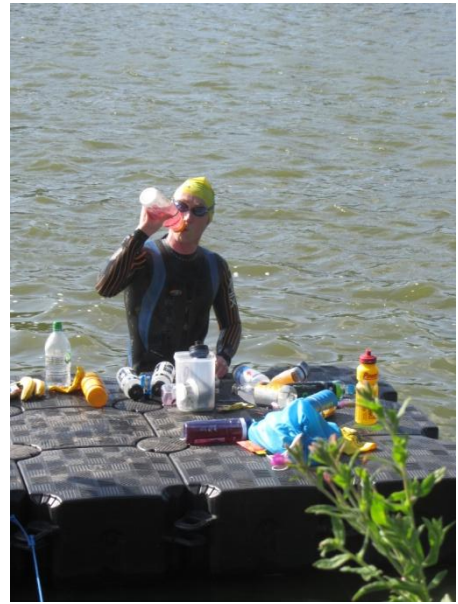
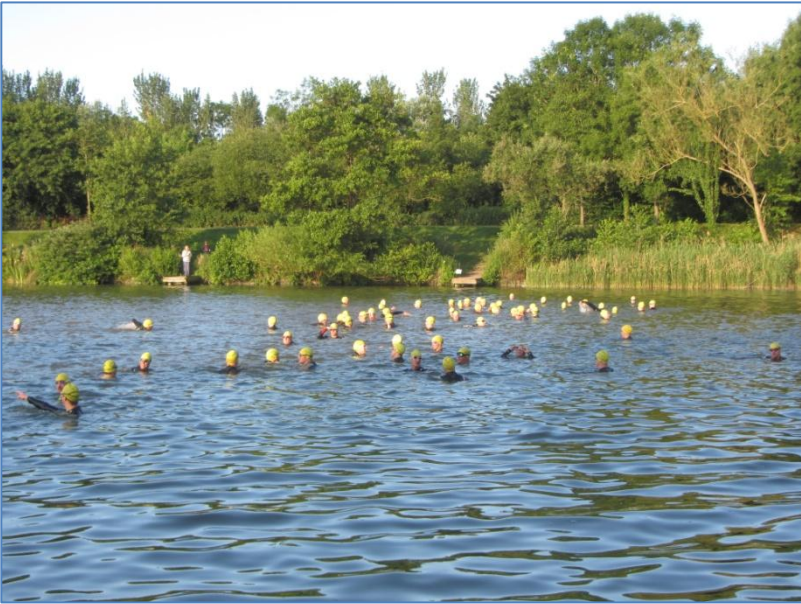
To excel at Iron distance triathlon you must be an excellent cyclist/runner.
To excel in Isoman you need to be an excellent triathlete!

Can you class Redditch as a foreign holiday?

No – sorry Elaine perhaps you should choose the races from now on!

Everything for everyone

The Isoman event isn't just one race it's a crazy fusion of anything you want: there is the full distance, half and quarter, a relay, a sportive or time trial, individual disciplines or a combination. This is a great idea but makes it difficult when you are racing to know exactly who is racing who. And just for good measure the weekly 5K park run was on as well.



The Race (9h32:12) 1st overall

A 7AM start is very, very, civilised for an Iron distance race, and it made a change to not rack your bike by torch light.

Swim (02:57:36) 8 laps

There was a subdued atmosphere in the water – probably since most of us had never swum this far in our lives. The advantage of such a long swim is that the start was very courteous and by the first buoy I found myself in the lead. However, I was soon overtaken by two others the second of which I managed to draft for the next lap and a half. My race plan was to stop at the nutrition pontoon on laps 2, 4 and 6 but the drafting was going so well I struggled to decide what to do: keep on drafting or stop for a drink. In the end I did stop and in hindsight this was the best decision since the others weren't even in the individual race! The notion of pausing your swim to get a drink felt quite alien and I was never sure if someone had passed me in the meantime. The drink and gel on each stop really helped to stem both the fatigue and boredom. Third out the swim and I was surprised at how well the swim went but I had no idea if I had judged the effort correctly.

Despite all my long swim training I had a few issues:

- My elbow started to hurt on lap 3 which stopped me using full power in that arm
- My wrists became really sore by lap 7 due to maintaining the same position for so long

Bike (03:12:29)

After 3 hours swimming I was surprisingly stable on my feet and was reasonably efficient through the neutralised transition and onto the bike. The route is 1 lap through typical rolling midlands countryside which meant you were constantly changing gear and direction. This made the race interesting but I couldn't believe how tired and sore my arms were, and how painful this made getting out of the saddle for the numerous short climbs. My right elbow was so sore it hurt just resting on the tri bars so I left it dangling by my side on the flatter bits! 20 miles in, and I had caught the relay team and was feeling good and looking to be easily under 3 hours for the bike.

When is a black arrow not a black arrow?

Then I noticed a black arrow pointing to the right?

I had driven the route the previous week and couldn't remember this turn, especially since it was across an A road and there was no marshal. I overshot this turn and came to a stop, the race brief had mentioned they had had to make a last minute change to the bike route so despite reservations I decided to follow the arrow. A mile on and another arrow so I thought this must be correct and climbed a hill up to a small village. Then nothing, a fork in the road and not a sign to be seen. I stopped in the middle of the road scratching my head (metaphorically since I had a helmet on). As I stood there heart rate dropping, the realisation that this wasn't the route and I had well

and truly cocked-up hit me. So I turned back. After a mile or so I saw the second place rider approaching and I waved my arms and shouted to him, then as I approached the original turn I met the third placed rider. We stopped in the road trying to decide what to do. Bizarrely I turned round again and rode with him back up to the second arrow. This time I stopped and examined the sign more closely and noticed that this one had some other race branding - not Isoman!! oh pants I said and returned back to the A road and continued in the original direction. 200m on and an Isoman sign I should have ignored the right turn! – a 6 mile detour for nothing and I was unsure if all of us had gone wrong or if other chasers were now ahead.

I was incandescent with rage all my gains on the bike were lost and I hammered the last section of the bike, cursing my foolishness constantly and going through race scenarios. Instead of riding in a controlled, confident and calm manner I was now constantly looking behind, I forgot to drink and skipped having one of my gels.

The race organisers were gutted that this had happened they thought they had cut down all the signs the night before but either they had missed one in the dark or the other race organiser had put the arrows back up again!

Run (03:22:07) 4 laps

I was first into T2 and I set off on the run too fast, but I was fired up and wanted to get sufficient a lead to remain out of sight of any chasers. The run was deceptively undulating with a couple of killer-subway dips under the main road. Saying that, the route was excellent, with it being mostly through the park and away from traffic. There were loads of water stations and great support from marshals, spectators and locals. Each of the 4 laps went past the finish and event centre, which helped boost your morale (as long as no one over took you in public view)



A marathon is *never* easy

Prior to the race I really thought a 3 hour marathon was achievable, especially with the shorter bike and no crazy hills on the bike or run. The first lap went ok but already I knew it was not to last and I could feel myself going into *hang-on* rather than *race* mode. My brother was marshalling and he witnessed first hand lap by lap the onset of the “Ironman shuffle”.

As each lap went past it got harder to gauge who were the chasers and I was constantly looking over my shoulder and panicking about being caught. Luckily I didn't get caught since by the last lap whenever I tried to up the pace but all that changed was the expression on my face!

Over the finish line I felt ok for a couple of minutes then I had to lie down in the shade for 20 mins. I felt so sick probably due to dehydration plus too many gels, and as I went up for my prize it took all my resolve not to spew into the microphone!

Race post mortem



I didn't expect the post swim fatigue in my arms to make the bike so hard.

I also thought that the much shorter bike would enable me to run a faster marathon, but the shorter bike just means you go harder and you still end up starting the run 6 hours into the race with “bike legs”.

In the days after the race my legs were in far better shape than after a normal Ironman, but the general fatigue and malaise was just as bad. I also felt woosy and light headed for the following 2 weeks. The only injury was a bit of tendonitis in my elbow from the swim.

Conclusion

This is a superb race. The organisers are triathlon fundamentalists more interested in producing a great race rather than profit. They produced the most extensive race pack and pre-race brief in triathlon history.

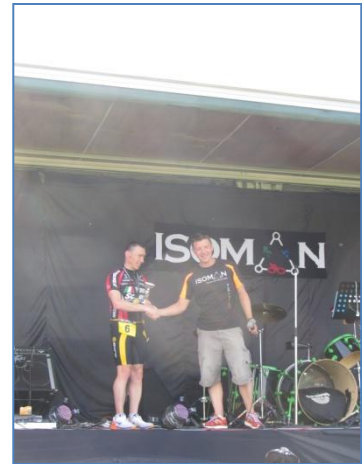
The race format is so much better and feels much more like going back to triathlon roots i.e. multi-discipline racing.

There is a real sense of achievement with this event.

Just like the race, the training is far more even - so you don't feel like you are spending all your life on your turbo and bike.

The long swim opens up a whole new world of long distance swim racing (which is growing rapidly) but they also expose you to more over-use injuries.

The neutralised transitions aren't as good as you think and certainly not as long. I am still undecided if you should transition quickly or stop for longer to stretch and eat/drink.



Training hints and tips

- Open water 4K swims as soon as the lake is open – I used booties and 2 tops underneath
- Stretch cords and pool swimming during the winter
- Buy a Power Breathe and get up to level 10
- Do a 10K swim race – Jubilee 10K is excellent
- Double up with a 60 mile bike time trial plus either a long swim or long run
- Do an endurance race – The Wainstones 26 fell race is really hard
- Get a sports masseur and make sure you get you back/neck/arms done as well as legs

Race hints and tips

- Attach your swim gels to your drink bottle with a rubber band and lie it down on the pontoon so it doesn't get knocked over
- Commit on the bike but don't get lost and don't over-cook it
- Remember 26 miles, IS 26 miles, hang on in there!
- The winners of both the full and half races were also those who had the most even splits over the 3 disciplines so tailor your training accordingly

The thanks

- Activities Away and Waterland for some great open water swimming
- The masseurs Holly and Rachel
- Podium Sport, Lincolnshire Runner
- My partner Elaine, who really loves getting up early and sitting in a field for 10 hours!
- The IsoMan Crew for a superb race

Notes on nutrition

Pre race	During Race
1 bottle of PSP22	2 bottles of SIS PSP22
1 cheese roll	1 bottle of High5 4:1
1 pot of rice pudding	4 SIS Go gels Isotonic Energy
1 Cliff Shot espresso	3 SIS Go gels Plus L-carnitine
	3 High5 gels
	4 High5 Isotonic gels
	1 Cliff Shot espresso
	1 Max Muscle Viper bar
	1 Cliff Bar



www.isomantri.com

Andy Fisher Race # 6