

# IRONMAN LANZAROTE

well we're back safe and sound. totally amazing experience and i cant wait to sign up for next year. even shaking on a drip afterwards i was plotting how to raise the entry fee!

to see the emotion on simons face as he came through into the medical tent grinning from ear to ear nearly in tears but looking amazing was a treat in itself. so a race review!

i dont think talking about just the day really covers the experience of ironman lanzarote. its more that just a race for me, i meet up with friends from many years ago and meet many new ones along the way. lanza being an early season race means we all have to train through the filthy winter months. this year its been fun to train with the other toddies going into their first experiences of it and share their stories of other big events they've done, making me want to try those too. so thanks to all of you who've been part of this years experience. over the day of the event you all popped in my head from time to time keeping going.

and yes i invited mr pain and mr hill along too!

so race morning dawns, or should i say pre dawns! trying to get your digestion to deal with breakfast at 4am with nerves-a-plenty is always interesting. across the island 1300 others all doing the same, fears filling the mind and body, a low wind blowing as early dawn fills the sky, bags and bikes racked, down to load up with frozen bottles, the faint hope they wont be tepid and sticky as the day.

a flood of rubberclad souls paddle forwards, timing mats bleeping and screeching as we move towards the beach, the still cool sand between our toes. music pumping cheesy tunes fear on faces, nervous smiles, titters, laughs, greeting new faces, new stories from them, a dip in the ocean to fill your suit, into the pens. a gun fires, surge forward the sounds of voices, languages, water screams, cheers, shouts, into the water, we're off! the cool flood hits your spine, blue ocean a thousand souls. calm flows amongst the chaos, breathe, the sunlight bursts amid the spray of salt water, a quarter round, into the home straight, a big blokes arm in the face walloping goggles, nice black eye later methinks. into the buoys, wetsuits slithering over one and other battling for air, space, water, pounding into the beach, running up the sand, music, screams, people again, names shouted, a blur of red and yellow, cameras flashing, back into the sea, round again, shoals of fish sparkle in the shafts of light now permeating the water, into the beach, running in sand, up the channel of people into jets of water, salt streaming away, tearing rubber from your body.

cycle kit on, running through racking of bikes, pumping music, skin plastered in high factor lotion (and hey this year the ladies was much nicer!) mount lines, a clicking of cleats, water drains from your body, nearly had another emotional moment thinking i'm here, i'm doing it, for me the race begins here, feeling the strength in my legs, pounding past lots of expensive carbon bikes and boys, ha! eat my wheels boys! turning out of puerto del carmen toward the lava fields at the bottom of the island, seeing the mountains come into view, bikes snaked out before me, the guards and oh so cool spanish cops at the junctions, car horns blasting, i spot my first cherwell shirt ( cherwell is my old tri-club, gotta love my red and yellow) screaming past richard shouting 'i eat firemen for breakfast' ...the chase begins down to el golfo the green lake where they make salt by desalinising the sea...bella passes (1st lady pro) having done the lower loop already, richard screeches past again, down into the lava fields. they look like they've just set, towering above with blown tops, black sharpened craggy edges, nothing grows upon the scorched earth save for the odd tuft of lichen. the wind was into our faces, hard, hot, drying, draining, passing richard again, screaming 'come on boy, chase me theres an official photographer round the corner it'd be one hell of a shot!'. i'm sure we did this tussle last year!

round and inland onto the most photographed road in triathlon, the road to timanfya national park. the landscape is black, sharp, crusted, great slabs time passed smashed into one and other, molten flowing then stopped. the road the same colour is like a giant iron slithered across its surface forming road.



me

up past la santa, inland again heading toward the 1st of the big climbs haria, up into the heat, vines cling in blackened ground surrounded by half circular walls, bright green spots, pickly pears, terracing climbing the hillsides, feed stations 'agua, agua, energy energy! animo! venga! animo!' down tight hairpin bends, stark white edges, into two storie white houses, screaming supporters, off to climb the next one, now here was a point that made me chuckle, two girls a tinny radion and a mega phone, blasting 'i will survive' up mirador del rio. just as the climb gets tough i look left to see the island of la grasiosa, azure blue sea, burnished volcanic island, so beautiful, top of the world, the pain disappears, the most amazing decent of the day, air hot and arrid, flying down the island me and the bike as one, twisting and turning bends, my road!

down into the home straight, a momentary distraction, thoughts 'hmmm ooh look my shoulder.....fuck!' dirt tracking off the side of the road scrubby tumble weedy plants, halt, phew, awake now, heat distraction, back to focus, back in the road, head cooking in the heat, squirting tepid water at my head. hold it together, dont crash, 175km sign, sprint, can i get under 6 hours, harder, hotter, legs screaming, eyes locked, onwards, wheres the donkey track (the donkey track was put in specifically for the race and links back to puerto del carmen from the centre of the island, lovely bends), beginning to think where is it, still charging, wheres it gone? this is never 5k, more like 15k, bloody signs in the wrong place! head wind back in, down along the sea front, crowds screaming, music blasting, hard bike, much harder than last year, winds stronger, hotter. into transition....

running, legs amazingly feel quite fresh, thinking of simon saying save it, negative splits, hard but effective, hot, water on head, worried, not hunngry, cant face eating, hot hot windy hot, faces from the week along the beach, smiling calling encouragement, a guy with a blue wig singing for me on a tiny bike, 'im the guy from the bar, go emma go!' red and yellow supporters, feed, oranges, pretzels, water, ok me thinks, chop it up in your head, honestly i spend an hour calculating ' well this is the 3rd section of 8 sections so that means i've run 3 sections of 8 sections so thats.....erm 3 of 8 can that be smaller...no....doh 3/8 emma you muppet....leaving um how many sections....um of 5 so....5/8...oh now thats...half now so two bands on my arm, collect another, pretty pretty, whoops that mans walkingh, another vomitting, ooh paramedic, that ones over on the floor, bleeping mats, concentrate, last lap, simons getting closer, come on legs, really ought to have done more running, why did i want to do this again....anyway next year i'll do....next year, more pain again, why....come on legs here we go...' three bands on my arm, (these help the supporters too as they all chant 'go on girl last lap' ' guapa guapa' (yeah right, not sure smelly sweaty eyes rolling could ever be described as guapa!))....the red and yellow screaming, into the last 200m, they reach for you, arms out, i'm screaming....12.52 and im in! cameras flashing medal, camera people race organiser shakes your hand ( kenneth vasque owns the licence for the spanish ironman and stands on the finishline all day shaking everybodys hand. his passion for what he does shines out of him. this race may make his living but you can tell its far more than thast and thats what makes it special).

paddle forward onto the medical tent, amazingly i dont feel too bad. into a bed, gentle chat, lets the brain process it all, blanketed souls, blanketed me, i must say they'd hired even prettier medics than last year, a fireman called bryn comes in taking the cot next to me and we admire the lovely view as the spanish doctor bends over to tend to the guy opposite! i look at bryns face laughing. drip in and chill out, really chill out, cold, eat something, bad idea, legs stiff and locking up, feel sick, starting to shake. at this point i know its just the saline cooling me and it will pass, poor kirsten has snuk in to see me convulsing under a pile of blankets, eyes wild, it passes, in come simon, the buzz on his face, then my friend jim, both just completed their first and of so proud, richard next. finally i get up, yuk blistered manky feet, off to the finishline to wait for debi to come in and matt. too wobbly, back in, chat to richard, already we're planning next year, off for a massage....food....dry clothes...smiling faces....

what can i say, the most amazing day. i strongly recommend that one day you try it. its hard it hurts but it will last in your mind as an experience of every emotion you can think of crammed into such intensity. i love it!

Bring on Nice!

*Emma Ossenton*

