



Bunberri Classic – 5th November 2006 Bunbury, Western Australia

The Bunbury State Series Olympic Distance Triathlon has traditionally been held in late January or early February. Late summer is the business end of the triathlon season and the calendar is jam packed at that time of year. The enormous popularity of Ironman WA in December created an opportunity. Bunbury Triathlon Club took a chance and decided to run the event in early November. A hard hitout four weeks before Busselton works in well with the preparation of Ironman triathletes. The biggest field for years entered Sunday's Berri Classic Triathlon.

Twenty-two of these disciplined (and perhaps slightly deranged) Ironman entrants rode their bikes from Perth on the Sunday. The strong South Easterly must have made the 180kms feel like 250!

Chip Van Halen, last year's winner, has been based in Bunbury for over a year. A good run with injury and consistent training schedule has him in his best shape for years. He looked the favourite but there was some excellent competition from Perth's finest. WA longcourse champion Steve Bishop, last year's runner up Brynt McSwain and Matt Jennings, fresh from the world champs in Hawaii, all made the trip down the highway.

Kate Bevilaqua looked the standout amongst the women. Kate recently had a strong performance on the Gold Coast. She looked a class above her female challengers (and most of the male age groupers).

The big news on race morning was the late entry of the Filipino National team. Two men and two women along with their manager Peter Gonzalez have been training in Perth for several weeks. The team is headed for the Asian games in early December. Gonzalez heard about the Bunbury race late last week and scurried to get late entries in for he and his charges.

The sky was grey and menacing as race briefing began. The wind was whipping in from the South East. At 7:30am, Race Director Adam Shine got the swimmers going on their 1.5km, 2 lap circuit of the Bunbury Ski Beach.

Super swimmers Van Halen and Bishop were up the front in a group of eight. Dan Loughnan stretched them out on the second lap and was first into transition. Bishop not far behind and Van Halen looking strong 30 seconds further back.



After transition the riders settled in for the six lap, 40km bike leg. Within two circuits of Bunbury's Inner Estuary, Chip Van Halen had taken the lead. Loughnan fell back through the field and Bishop looked out of his best form. Matt Jennings began to charge through having lost a minute to Van Halen on the swim. Brynt McSwain moved into second place and was riding smoothly.

In a big surprise, Trevor Neaves was first man off the bike. Trevor is a Bunbury icon and keen Ironman competitor. Unfortunately he didn't pay enough attention in the pre-race briefing. Neavesy was ordered out to complete another two laps.

There was no stopping Van Halen. He clocked the fastest bike time of the day and went into transition over a minute in front of his nearest rival. Van Halen's nearest rivals were still riding up the road as he eased out onto the 10km run.

McSwain and Jennings put on their sneakers side by side. Jennings then proceeded to bolt out of transition and looked determined to run Van Halen down.

Van Halen cruised the first of two laps in just over 18 minutes. Jennings came by 50 seconds later and looked to be hurting. McSwain was running steadily and still within sight of Jennings.

Van Halen's second lap was just as smooth as his first. He crossed the line with a high five and a grin. Jennings held off McSwain by 10 seconds in a sensational effort.

In the women's race, Kate Bevilaqua was too strong all the way. She came out of the water with the age group men for company. The small blonde in a fluoro green racing outfit stood out among the big blokes, most of whom were wearing black.

Her bike time was 5 minutes faster than the next woman. She donned a visor in transition and joined the top men out on the run course. Kate also posted the fastest female run time of the day. Her winning margin of 12 minutes proved her class and indicates she will be up there with the best at Busselton in four weeks.

Kerry Bailie, the superwoman of Bunbury, came in second. Kerry combines a nursing job, chasing three kids, presidency of the tri club and ironman training. It is rumoured that Kerry hasn't slept since April.

Sandra Araullo from the Phillipines proved the strongest of their small team. She was the third woman home and judging by her smile, she had a great day.

The Lyondell Sprint Triathlon was being run at the same time. Nicola Holmes, a young athlete from Perth, showed the field a clean pair of kicking feet in the swim. She



established a one minute lead. Jason Nuttman and a pack of others including Matt Lowth were left in her wake.

Lowth, a seasoned triathlete, was easing himself into the season. He quickly took the lead in the cycle leg and set up a 45 second lead going into the run. Wayne Voss and Ryan Wilmot were still in contention if they could put together a fast run.

Nicola Holmes lost her lead to veteran Robyn Scott who Scott had pulled back 2 minutes with a trademark steady ride. Carol Hughes was 70 seconds further back, close enough if she was good enough.

Wayne Voss ran well and made up ground on the leader, but Lowth took victory by ??? seconds. Wilmot struggled with the fresh air of Bunbury. He had been on a submarine for weeks with only an exercise bike to train on. Much to the amusement (and disgust) of the spectators, he reacquainted himself with his breakfast just fifty metres from the finish. Like a good competitor he held onto his podium finish by jogging unsteadily across the line.

Holmes was too swift for her rivals on the run. She crossed the line 10th overall, 37 seconds in front of Robyn Scott. Carol Hughes was a further 30 seconds back.

The big interest at presentation was the major spot prize. A skydive adventure was up for grabs. Miles Dracup was the first name called but wouldn't accept much to the disappointment of the crowd. There was no stopping the man who was called second. Jumping Jimmy Hedderwick from Busselton is set for the ride of his life!

As cars loaded with bikes headed back to Perth, Bunbury Tri Club reflected on a job well done. Adam Shine, and his army of volunteers had put on an excellent race. Tri Season 2006/07 is off to a flier!

By Scott Mackie