



Race Report – Ironman Western Australia 2009 **By Courtney Ogden (4th Place – Pro Field)**

After the disappointment of the Hawaii race, it was satisfying to finish the year with a solid result in the Busselton event.

Robbie Pickard, my mentor from many years ago, devised a program for the event and sent it through with the note to use either all, none or some of it in the lead up to the race. Unfortunately, due to a nagging problem with my calf, I couldn't follow it to the letter, but utilised most of the swimming and cycling schedule with little modification.

I first developed the calf problem a week prior to the Hawaii event. I did a training run in racing flats for the first time in a while and awoke the following morning with pain in my calf just above the Achilles tendon. It didn't feel, at the time, like the type of injury that was going to be much of a problem on race day, and, as it turned out, it wasn't – ha ha ha.

As I began my preparations for Busselton, it was clear the calf was more of a problem than I had first envisaged.

I visited Kieran at **BIOSYMM** to see if needling the usual suspects of Tom and Harry would rectify the problem, and, although this provided some relief, it was apparent that something was still not quite right.

We thought more about it and suspected that it may be an issue with the tibial nerve that passes through the area. Nerve stretching helped to ease the problem, and made it possible to get some consistent running started about three weeks out from the race. I always pulled up sore, but with the correct care, the inflammation settled sooner and sooner after each running session.

It is still an issue, but didn't affect me at all on race day.

I believe I will either have to stop running completely for an extended period, or have an ultrasound guided injection of cortisone into the area around the nerve to settle it down for good.

As Raija had to work, I was reliant on my Ogden Academy athletes to ferry me down to Busselton. Damein (yes, that is the correct spelling) Nabbs was first to put his hand up, and, with entertainment in tow - Vivian "Whisper" "Val" Oldfield - we made the journey down on the Tuesday evening.

As always, Raija and I were modestly accommodated in the "holiday shack" of **PHARMACY 777's** Greg MacKenzie.

Greg and Sue have again displayed their unwavering support by allowing us to stay in their wonderful house. Nothing is ever a problem, we know they are behind me 100% and it is the perfect environment to prepare for race day. They were both on the sidelines, together with two of my other great supporters, Murray and Cara McIntyre of **SPORTS FEVER**, offering support and encouragement for the entirety of the race.

Recently I had a visit from my Ironman Canada homestay hosts - Cathy and Harold Daradics.

I asked Greg and Sue if it was possible to take them down to the Busselton house for the weekend, and, of course, it wasn't a problem. Cathy and Harold had a fabulous time and I can't thank Greg and Sue enough for their generosity in helping Raija and I give something back to our loyal and caring Canadian friends.

The end result of the Busselton race is influenced a great deal by the swim leg. The course generally does not favour the strong cyclist, as the flat terrain of the course combined with the winds and seven metre draft zone make "sitting in" relatively easy. It is a bit unfortunate, but, as a professional, it is a requirement to recognise this fact and do all possible to exit the water with the leaders.

Rob had more swimming than I would normally do scheduled for the lead up to the event, and the extra volume seemed to have paid dividends. I exited the water with the lead pack and had the energy to transition quickly to the cycle leg, guaranteeing that I would be cycling with the leading group all day.

I think this was the most confident I have ever been prior to the start of a triathlon with regard to my swimming form. I positioned myself on the far left of the line up, and sprinted the first 100-150 metres to establish a position in the leading group.

I did notice two or three athletes getting away at the start and there wasn't much I could do about it. They slowly eased away as the rest of us made our way towards the end of the jetty. I was sitting second or third wheel in the next group

of athletes and would stay in this position until the turnaround point.

I noticed a slowing of the pace on the return journey due to the chop whipped up by the southerly breeze. I made the decision to move to the front not long after the turn and dragged the pack all the way to the final blue marker buoy adjacent to the jetty, picking up one of the tiring lead swimmers along the way.

Everyone decided at this point that they wanted to exit the water first and the pace lifted another notch. It was difficult to see the remaining marker buoys due to the sun and chaos reigned for the balance of the swim. Athletes seemed to be swimming in all different directions, and, despite my best efforts to maintain my position at the head of proceedings, I exited the water about mid pack. I was surprised at the time about the size of the group, but I shouldn't have been.

In the past I may have exited in the same position, but had limited energy for a fast transition. On this occasion I had the energy to move quicker with some real clarity of mind. This enabled me to coordinate my transition movements more efficiently and I was second to my bike behind Jimmy Johnson (isn't that just a fantastic name).

If I had the benefit of hindsight, I may have pushed the bike hard from the start and made the effort to bridge to JJ. I was time trial fit after hours of time trialling on the freeway bike path and together we may have established a significant lead on the chase pack.

On the other hand, if there were two athletes in front, the chase pack may have organised a more aggressive pursuit. There was plenty of fire power in the group to close down any breakaway if the desire was there.

I knew I had a number of athletes behind me so I was quite conservative at the start on the cycle. Vernay eased passed not long after entering Layman road for the first time and seemed to be pushing quite hard. I let him go at this point and waited for those further behind to go by and bridge the gap. I took a small risk here, but knew everyone had fresh legs and would not be prepared to let Vernay go.

As the last athlete passed me in pursuit of Vernay, I tagged onto the back and a group was soon formed. The group picked up both swim leaders, Scott Neyedli and Lawrence Van Lingen, in the first 20-30 kilometres, and Matty White and one other worked hard to bridge a ninety second swim deficit to the group after approximately 40km.

At this point the group was in the vicinity of 10 athletes strong.

It was a game of chess out there on the bike. Everyone knew that if someone from the pack was going to win, then JJ could not be given a significant

advantage to start the run. However, nobody really wanted to go to the front and pull.

I was quite sure that those with the lower bib numbers would be compelled to pull the pack, simply because they wanted to win the race. This turned out to be the case in part, with cameos from a few others. I, on the other hand, along with Tim Marr I believe (I could be mistaken though), chose not to go to the front once.

This was a bit of a shame, as I didn't get a chance to stretch the legs of my new steed. Fletch Newland from **CERVELO** helped to organise a pro-deal on a P3 frameset for me and I was very impressed with the feel of the P3 in training in the lead up to the event. I used to ride a P2K and was keen to get back on a cervelo after that experience.

My laziness during the cycle leg was so blatant in nature that one of my fellow competitors was moved to sledge me at the last turnaround with about 20 kilometres to cycle. I can't remember exactly what he blurted out, but he was clearly upset that I hadn't been seen at the front all day.

He looked remarkably similar to the individual who, for some unknown reason, tried to chest me off the running path in the Huskisson long course event earlier in the year.

After recognising who it was, I just had to smile and behold the irony of the situation.

During the last two Busselton events I have been on the receiving end of this exact situation.

On both occasions, I have had to put in futile solo chases of a lead pack working together for a common cause. As a result, I had no qualms about sitting on and enjoying the view from the back.

It is definitely not the way I usually like to race as my solo rides in the Busselton Half, Ironman Japan and Ironman Canada this year would attest, but, without a doubt, the smartest.

At about the 175km mark of the cycle leg I lost concentration, as I had been intermittently doing throughout, and failed to recognise a quickening of the pace. Josh Rix dropped off the back of the group and it took me more time than it should have to address the situation.

I had to chase the group in the last few kilometres and expend a bit more energy than I wanted, but only dropped about 20 seconds by the time I reached T2.

When I handed my bike over to the volunteers and started to run, I was feeling reasonable. In my experience, the first steps taken after getting off the bike will

be a good indicator of how the run is likely to go. If you “have legs” getting off the bike, then you will have the best chance of a good run.

I was controlled in the transition tent, didn't panic, and did all I needed to in reasonable time.

JJ had been running for close to 6 minutes at this point, Vernay, Matty White and Berkel were already at least 30 seconds up the road and Tim Marr and Scott Neyedli were within 10 seconds.

As I ran out of transition I didn't feel as good as I have in the past, but knew I would be good enough for a solid run.

I caught and passed Tim Marr in the first couple of kilometres, but Scott proved to be more of a challenge. We duelled for a kilometre or two before he slowly but surely pulled away and continued to do so throughout the run.

In the distance I saw that Berkel had been dropped early by Vernay and Matty White and seemed to be floundering. I made the pass at the 7km mark to move into fifth place and couldn't help but notice, just after I went by, that he seemed to have nasty cough. Although he was having a tough day, it was good to see he fulfilled his obligations to IMG and finished the event - this left JJ, Vernay, Matty White, and Neyedli up the road.

After seeing how well Vernay and Matty were running as I passed them going the other way at the first turnaround, I wasn't all that confident of catching either of them. The same went for Neyedli, as he had dropped me outright from the start. JJ seemed to be the only one I was making any impression on and I thought there may be a chance of getting him before the finish.

I never gave up all hope of catching the others at any stage, as, under the circumstances of the day, anything could have happened.

As I started the second lap of the run, there were more athletes out on course and it was difficult to determine the state of play. At the far turnaround, it was clear that Vernay and Neyedli had increased their lead, but I didn't notice both JJ and Matty for some reason at this point, and had no idea how I was going relative to them.

I received a surprise at Mount Everest on the way back as I spied Matty running across the bridge. It was obvious he had slowed significantly as I had reduced a substantial gap in a very small amount of time. By the next aid station 500 metres down the path and about 25 kilometres into the run, I had passed him to move into fourth place and set my sights on running down JJ to claim a podium spot.

I started the third and last lap with what seemed like reasonable energy, but the batteries were starting to fade. I held it together for the next 5km where I encountered the third place indicating MTB for the first time with JJ in tow. I shuffled by and thought at the time that it was going to be the last I would see of

him until the finish line. It seemed to be confirmed at the far turnaround where I had established a lead of close to 150 metres.

It was just a matter of completing the final 8 kilometres and another podium finish for the year was mine – or so it seemed. Unfortunately, 3 kilometres after making the pass, I heard the “pitter patter” of feet behind me.

I was really hoping it was a fast age grouper running through on their first or second lap but it was JJ making his run for home. After the event he said at this point his heart rate was sky rocketing; mine was diminishing. I was a spent force, and although I tried to go with him, I couldn't muster up the energy to follow.

I couldn't possibly begrudge JJ his third placing at my expense after he cycled solo all day. He deserved his result the most out of anyone on the day. I was still disappointed though – third looks so much better than fourth! I went through the motions, finished it off and was pretty happy to cross the finish line.

I didn't feel great in the initial minutes after I finished, but was pleased that I wasn't in the same state as I have been in my previous two Ironman events. After taking some fluid on board, I felt relatively good.

Raija chose to sacrifice her race to make sure I was ok after I finished. It was great to have her support at this time as she couldn't be there for both the Japan and Canada events.

My Mum, Dad and brother Nicholas were also cheering for me on the day and it was extremely important to me that I gave them a positive experience. Along with Raija, my family have never questioned my desire to be an athlete and they never will.

OGDEN ACADEMY had a mixed day.

Brad Wall had a blinder – PB'd, won his age group by 32 minutes and qualified for Hawaii for the second year in a row.

John Annear finished second in his age group with a PB, I believe, and also booked a ticket to Hawaii.

The boys were somewhat smug the day after the race and JA slept in his Kona attire (actually, that may have been a fib).

Rachel Renton was over the moon to complete her first Ironman on a tough day in 14 hours 32 minutes.

Brad Renton had a great time towing around a pack of 10-20 for the vast majority of the cycle leg (as reported by another of my athletes who was at the back of the said pack). As a result, his opposition had fresher legs for the run.

Despite this, he was 13 mins better than his last effort in 2007, a much easier day in anyone's book.

Brad will be more sensible in his next race.

Brad and Rach are owners, with Rob, of **BIKE FORCE SUCCESS**. They are passionate about triathlon (Rob competed as well) and cycling and have the best bike shop in town.

Give them a go – you won't be disappointed.

Damein Nabbs has progressed athletically about as far as any of my athletes. He has gone from a muffin munching slob, to a lean, mean swimming, cycling and running machine. I was hoping for big things from the big fella – anything was possible based on his training leading up to the event, but the weather put a spanner in the works.

Damo doesn't like the heat much and we got the wrong day. Despite a 23 minute PB, I know Damo was bitterly disappointed with his day and I felt for him.

Troy Ward had a disappointing swim by his own admission, completed a sensible cycle leg and then had a great first half of the run before succumbing to the heat.

I know Troy wasn't happy with his day but he still managed a 27 minute PB relative to last year.

Like Damo, I carry some of Troy's disappointment too, but know he will bounce back in the best possible way.

We have yet to see the best from Chalky, but will do in the near future.

Neil Griffen was the wildcard of the Ogden Academy participants. Due to other commitments, Neil had limited time training with the group. Apart from the odd progress report, I had no real idea exactly how his training was shaping up.

His time trials indicated he would be vying for the tag of Ogden Academy champion. Against him though, was the fact that this was his first race over the distance.

Neil finished the event in 10.20, a time which was significantly slower than his training numbers would indicate. After reporting that he felt he went out too hard in the cycle and found the event a lot tougher than he imagined it would be, I think the lack of experience over the distance was a big determining factor in the result.

Viv Oldfield - the clown prince of the group. Whenever everyone was tired and jacked off with training, Viv was there to make us all smile.

I was never quite sure how Viv was going to go, but judging from his last few important sessions, I knew he was far from his best. It is always a challenge

fitting in work, life, training and sleep, and I think Viv found this his biggest obstacle.

Despite his less than optimal preparation, Viv had a triumphant swim, exiting much faster relative to some of his Ogden Academy comrades than anyone thought possible. It is something to remind us all about in the coming months.

Viv cycled a bit below par, but the real damage was done on the run – or should I say run/walk. Whenever it is a requirement to walk, finish time is going to suffer, especially when walking close to two full laps. He made a few friends in the process, was one of many in the same boat, and got to the finish in 12.36 – nothing wrong with that.

Viv should be satisfied with his day.

Raija, my beautiful wife, decided to do the race 7 weeks out while waiting in the airline lounge on our way back from Hawaii. She entered online right there and then. After the disappointment of seeing me DNF the Hawaii race, she didn't want to sit on the sidelines again in Busselton.

Due to work commitments, Raija had limited time to train and went into the event a bit underdone. She was knocked around in the swim and now has a black eye to prove it, and her limited cycling preparation made the cycle leg very uncomfortable for her. She did manage a reasonable amount of running training, but her fatigue after the cycle didn't allow her to take advantage of it.

She exited T2 just prior to me starting my third and final lap on the run. After I caught her and she realised I was going to finish with a solid result, she decided to go and have a swim – ha ha ha.

It was great to have her waiting for me at the finish line instead of slogging away out on course.

Chris Obrien and Scott Watson made up an Ogden Academy team. Chris had visions of competing in the event but succumbed to a running injury, so recruited his mate, Scott, to do the run in a team event.

Chris was very disappointed he couldn't compete as an individual as a couple of his comments pre-race indicated. In my opinion, for someone like Chris, if the preparation hasn't been satisfactory, there is no point being on the start line. The team event was a good alternative in this instance.

I have to say that Scott's preparation to run the marathon was limited to say the least. We needed at least another six weeks, but it was what it was. The combination of limited preparation and heat made it a tough day for Scott. He got to the finish though, and that is all that matters in this instance.

We did have one triumph with Scott in the lead up to the event. We sorted out a

problem with a regularly occurring running “stitch”, which was proving to be a bit of a pain in the backside.

It is here where I thank my awesome supporters:

Greg, Dave, Michael and Kim from **PHARMACY 777** – nothing is ever a problem.

Murray McIntyre from **SPORTS FEVER** was on the sidelines with wife Cara giving me tremendous support and encouragement. **SPORTS FEVER** has been a great supporter of mine over the past few years.

A recent addition to the Applecross, Inglewood and CBD **SPORTS FEVER** stores has been “**The Gait Lab**”, which is a system to assess the biomechanical characteristics of each individual’s running gait. This information can be useful for a variety of purposes.

Kieran, Greg and the team at **BIOSYMM Workplace Injury Management** Kieran was in Busselton on race day at the far end of the run course riding me all the way.

Kieran is a Kojonup boy – country - nothing more to be said.

Kieran, Greg and the **BIOSYMM** team are expert practitioners and are my first port of call when I have any hint of an injury forming.

Brad, Rachel and Rob from **BIKE FORCE SUCCESS** – the best and friendliest bike shop in Perth, without a shadow of a doubt.