



ITU Triathlon World Championships Gold Coast, 9 - 13 September 2009

Race Report



World Championships - Olympic Distance James Lewin – 2nd 18 – 19 age group

After only competing in one of the Challenge Series race (Perth) and having a less than spectacular race there, I was sceptical about my chances of being selected in the Aussie team. A nervous few weeks followed after submitting my application. Luckily for me the 18-19 category wasn't full and there was room for me...on the Australian Team!

My training in the lead-up to the race in September was the best race leads-up for me so far. How well I train for an upcoming event is more a question of how much I can do before I get injured, rather than how much time I have, or how much I want to do. Thankfully I was fairly niggly free for my 15 week training program.

Coincidentally the week leading into World Champs was a tuition free week at Uni, so I chose to fly over to the sunny Gold Coast a few days early and get the edge over my competition by acclimatising. I believe lack of acclimatising has been one of the reasons why I have often not been satisfied with my interstate races. As it turned out, everyone else had the same idea. I arrived at the Gold Coast on Tuesday and got settled into the Main Beach accommodation quickly. I stayed in a house full of athletes (this is a new thing for me). Four junior boys (Mike Lori, Joe Kierath, Ryan Bailie, and myself) as well as Ryan's mum, Kerry (a brilliant chef) and sister Alex. I think staying in a house full of other people who were preparing for a race really helped my nerves.

On Wednesday we all caught up with a few other WA athletes and went for a quick ride, mainly to make sure that everything was running smoothly after I had seen a few pesky Airport baggage handlers throw mine, and other bike boxes onto a trolley. All was in good nick...pheww. This ride was also a chance to get a rough idea of how the other boys were shaping up. The aquathlon later that day was our only chance to practise racing on the course, and it helped get some pre-race nerves out of the way, even if I did show up to transition 5 minutes before the race started.

The Aquathlon was great fun, but my shoes gave me a nasty blister on my heel which stopped me from doing any running between then and race day, and instead spent most of my time with salt water and fixemol. The best thing that I got out of the aquathlon was realising that I was right in the mix in my age group (even though many of the top contenders didn't race the aquathlon)

The rest of Wednesday, Thursday and Friday mainly involved a few team functions, the parade of nations (which was a heap of fun, and this is where the size of the event really struck me), a few last minute bike adjustments (which was looking very swish with a rear disc wheel-courtesy of Matt "Bulldog" Jennings), a few brief training sessions, and a lot of relaxing. Mum and Dad also arrived on Thursday and I caught up with them to have the good old 'go out there and have fun' talk.

I went to bed on Friday night with a belly full of carbs, an iPod playing Jeff Buckley in my ears, a stomach full of butterflies, and a piece of paper under my pillow which read "Good luck James, from Emma Snowsill". Someone in the next room, who shall remain nameless, kept me up for another hour or so, because they forgot to turn their phone off. I think I counted about 15 messages in about 20 minutes at one stage. I think I was the only one who wasn't able to sleep through the 'beep-beep'.

The next morning was all routine and panned out really smoothly - my transition was set up about 45minutes before race start. Unfortunately for Ryan, his tyre had had a slow leak overnight, and had to be left in the trusty hands of Jason Shortis and his team of

mechanics in the hope that they would have it repaired before he got out of the swim. The good man on my right shoulder was concerned for a fellow WA athlete, and a good mate, while the evil man on my left shoulder was laughing, because he knew Ryan would be hard to beat, and any stress put on him could help me.

The water was 20 degrees-a wetsuit swim. I think I was the only one happy with the news, as I have pulled out some fantastic swims in a wetsuit. Now it was time to gather up the boys, go for a jog, suit up, get any last minute good licks from parents, coaches, and get to the start line.

I spent the last 5 minutes before the start eyeing off my opposition. There were two Queensland boys (Drew Viles, and Campbell Schmidt) who I knew were real contenders for a podium finish, as well as of course, the other TEP boys. I noticed one international with the name Gomez on his suit, but tried not to think if he was swimming in the same gene pool as the machine Javier. I got a spot on the line between Mike and Ryan - I knew that Mike had been in excellent recent form in the pool so the plan was to tap his toes the whole way. Standing on the line, not getting a countdown was gut wrenching. "One minute". "OK James, you're in better form than you ever have been, this is it!". The horn went, and I had a pretty lousy start, as the boys either side of me got the advantage into the water, and I had to slow up so I wasn't swimming on top of them. Going around the 1st buoy I pushed hard for about 150m to try and find some clean water. For the next 400m or so I just cruised, but I wasn't able to bridge the gap to what looked like about 6 boys about 20m ahead of me. I really needed some feet to jump on. [*queue heroic music*]. Mike came to save the day, he swam up beside me, and then straight past me, and I jumped straight on his feet. He was swimming fast! Even sitting on his feet was a struggle. We caught one, then two, then three, 'Go Mike, Go!' Then we passed a whole bunch which I assumed was the tail end of the ladies wave. I think I may have caused a bit of a stir there, hitting a few heads...(sorry ladies). I managed to hang onto Mike's feet all the way, though it really hurt. As we stood up and sprinted up the beach, I heard the commentator say that the 1st boy was entering transition (this put me about 20 seconds down). Second boy was Drew Viles, then Mike, then me. Swim: 4th out, 19:08.

T1 was abominable-I couldn't, for the life of me, unzip my brand new wetsuit. I didn't get it down till I reached my bike. Once onto the bike I wanted to get into a rhythm as quickly as possible. Within a few kilometres, I found myself riding with Mike, and Campbell Schmidt, who had a blistering transition. My on-the-spot race plan was to ride with these boys until about 30km, and then try and gap them in the last 10, as I knew they could both outrun me. The two-lap out-and-back bike course took in scenic views of Labrador Beach and Runaway Bay. By the time we turned to head out on our second lap, there were a lot more men on the course, and that's when the trains started forming. Mike always made sure to let me know when I was getting too close to a wheel. The cycle was a good opportunity to see where I was sitting amongst my age group. Drew was about 30secs up the road, Ryan was about a minute behind, but closing very fast. When he did catch up, he put in a little surge, and flew past at 56km/h, just to be sure that no-one chased after him...but we all did anyway. The last 10km of the bike, I was stuck in a train. All I could do was try and get to the front, but inevitably I would be rolled over by everyone else again. Sitting in a pack is great if you want to save your legs, but

if you are trying to get away from the runners, it's a bit frustrating. I jumped off the bike in 5th with Ryan, Campbell, and a US athlete. Drew was just up the road, and Mike was about 30secs back. Cycle:4th, 58:54.

T2 was once again a bit of a disaster. While trying to get my runners on, the tape covering my blister came off. I made a split second decision to push through so I wouldn't lose the other boys out of transition. About 100m out of transition, my mind changed completely, and I stopped, took my shoe off, and tried to reapply the tape. Unfortunately this meant that Ryan and Campbell got away. Another 100m or so down the road, I saw Campbell, and was catching him fast. He was limping pretty heavily. Later on I found out that he had an ITB problem-lucky for me because it would have been tough to outrun him on a good day. I now sat in 4th - one more and I'm on the podium!. I then passed the US athlete. 3rd. I saw Vilesy up the road at the 1km mark, and I knew I was catching him, but not very quickly. I was worried about putting in any surges, as I knew they would seriously hurt me, so I stuck to my rhythm and got him at about 2km. 2nd! At the 2.5km turn around, Ryan was the 1st boy I saw, and I was the next. Now all I had to worry about was staying away from the runners for another 7.5km. It didn't take too long before Mike caught me, and thankfully he didn't surge past. "Run with me" he said. So I did, and I was feeling good. At halfway, Ryan had already gapped us by 1 minute, so it looked like I was battling for 2nd place. Running up a little hill, I went past Mike, and at the next turn around, he had fallen right back, and he wasn't looking so good. I just cruised for a while, making sure to stay out of the 'red zone'. With 2km to go, super coach Grant Landers told me that I had about 40m on Drew Viles, and I knew he would have a nasty kick at the end. So I knew it was time to kick. I ran through the crowds, gritting my teeth, too scared to grab an Aussie flag, in the fear that Drew might sprint past me. It wasn't until the finish chute that I had a brief glance behind, I was in the clear! I took my time, high-fived the crowd, and crossed the line. Ryan was standing there, and he told me I was definitely 2nd. What a race!!

That night was worthy of a drink or 3!

Going to World Champs as part of the Australian Team, as part of TWA's Triathlon Excellence Program was an experience that can't be matched, and I really would like to thank all the people that got me onto the podium. First of all, my Mum and Dad, Moira & David, for making the trip over and supporting me every step of the way. Brian Kempson, the TEP coordinator, who has helped so many junior triathletes, including myself to really reach our potential in the sport. My coaches at UWA Triathlon Club, Grant and Sarah, and my running coach Jon Kappler.

James Lewin