

Mansfield Tri Club – Race Report
Skinfit Derby Spring Triathlon – 13th May 07

Name	Hugh Barnett
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Race Name	Skinfit Derby Spring Triathlon
Date	14 th May 07
Type	Triathlon
Distance	500m swim/28k bike/6k run
Venue	Etwall, Derbyshire
Course	Pool swim/open road bike/off-road run
Weather	Cloudy but cool
Race Contacts	Derby Triathlon Club
Competitors	Local
Overall Result	72nd
Other Result	
Club Results	Six others from MTC: best placed Chris Dale 12th 1:26:04
Winner Info	Eugene Grant 1:18:00

Race Report There's just one word that can sum up this morning's triathlon - OUCH!!!!!! . For the first time in a triathlon I felt proper pain in my legs. What I had previously thought of as pain was merely discomfort: today I could feel my quads straining to get me through the run and cramp hit as I went up the final hill on the way to the finish line. But... finish I did and that is now 6 triathlons completed and the second in a week. The Mad Month of May is two-thirds complete!

The number 1 reason for entering this race today was to test myself over longer distances than the sprints that I have been doing. There were some changes to the bike and run course from 2006 so it meant that this event was a 500m swim, 18 mile bike, and 6km run. The swim was completed in 14:36 and T1 took 4:04, giving a swim split of 18:40. The bike took 77:35, and the run was 44:46 giving a total time of 2:21:01. Looking at the 2006 results I fully expect to come last overall today but just finishing makes me a winner (in my world at least).

Fortunately the weather held off and the race itself was done in dry and cool conditions. The swim was nice and flat, but a bit wet, the cycle course was dry and undulating, and the run was mostly off road down an old railway track that can get very mucky when it's wet and very dusty when it's dry. Today it was a nice dry - not mucky, not dusty.

The swim was fairly unremarkable but there was some congestion in my lane half-way through that would have added some seconds to the time. The swim felt good and I'm really pleased with how my swimming is coming on. Today I did 500m all front crawl and this time last year I was a breast-stroke racer - that in itself is a huge personal achievement. One bizarre moment came when, after really cranking up my pace to overtake a swimmer, I turned to start the next length and he was in front of me again - how, I do not know.

What can I say about T1? Not much really, so I won't.

The bike ride went as expected (apart from my blooming useless computer) and the time of 78 minutes was probably slightly better than anticipated although I had only practiced the old, longer course: two weeks ago it took 89 minutes to do 19 miles. I did like the changes to the course because they took out some awkward right-turns and it made it a slightly safer course.

On the bike course it was my turn to be overtaken - a lot!! Some of the speeds other racers were getting on their bikes made me feel very jealous (and slow!). This was where I was able to start gauging the progress of other Mansfield Tri Club members and the first one to pass me was Mike Hankin: this was at the start of the long drag to Long Lane. I'd seen Mike lining up at pool-side ready to start his swim just as I was leaving the pool so I knew he'd already got a good pace going to be overtaking me that early into the course (not even half-way round at this point). Then, as I was heading back to Etwall after doing the 360o turn at the Seven Wells Roundabout I saw Alan Bilzon heading down to the roundabout so I knew he would be close to catching me fairly soon. Alan was still behind me as we entered T2 but he had a very quick transition because he was in front of me as we left to start the run.

The run was the journey into the unknown. I've done a few 6km runs in training so I was confident I had 6km in me but what was unknown was how my legs would cope after the longer swim/cycle.

I had hoped that today I could up my average pace during the run because there have been signs in training that I'm ready to increase the speed work. However, early on it was fairly clear that I was going to have to do this in my normal manner and pace myself to make sure I got to the end. The first 3km were Ok: breathing was good, left leg wasn't numb and legs were not protesting too much. Alan disappeared ahead of me so I knew he was going at a good pace and sure enough he reached the turnaround and was heading back on the final 3k whilst I was still heading to turnaround. The next MTC member to pass me was Steve "The Colonel" Melhuish who gave some nice encouragement as he went past: I really do wish I could run as fast and as comfortably as these guys, but this will only come with more training. I was caught by Anton Newell at turnaround and more encouragement was given. I had now been passed by all but two of our members, which meant that Chris Dale and Dave Presho (Presh) were still to come.

It was after turning round at the half-way point on the run that the legs began to start arguing with me. I started to feel a sharp sensation in both quads and it was not a lactate burn that I've had before - this felt like I was straining something. Working on the theory that they might need more fuel I sucked on a gel to get some carbohydrate to them and followed up with a sports bar (this was a mistake - the stomach didn't like solid food at that point). Somehow I kept going. By this stage I was not going to quit and I was determined to get to the end even if it meant walking back. I was going to finish this bloody race by hook or by crook. I was also now into unknown territory in that my previous longest time in a tri was 2:02:06 (Lincoln sprint last year). As soon as the watch had passed this time I had been racing for the longest period of time I'd ever done. New demands were being made on my body and my body was telling me this in its own inimitable way.

It was as I was getting close to the end of the straight bit that I saw Chris Dale coming in the opposite direction. I have to admit to thinking "I hope I finish before

he overtakes me". You see, the thing is, Chris is 15 and has huge potential. He out-swims, out-cycles and out-runs most of the guys in our club and I knew he was perfectly capable of making up the distance between us (about 4k at that point). But, because of where I was on the course I was hoping to finish with some people still behind me because I didn't want to be the last finisher. It was also at this point where I was wondering where the heck Presh was. He'd started his swim before Chris and ought to have been ahead of him at that stage. It was not long afterwards that Presh did appear on the run course so I had been able to see and speak to all the MTC members doing today's race.

By this time my quads really were having an argument with me and screaming at me to stop, pesky little blighters. But, as I crested the last hill to take me back onto the road I finally knew what the problem was - cramp! I'd thought I might've been giving myself muscle strains but the quads had been having lots of little cramps on the last 3k and a big one hit as I got onto the final flat. Fortunately there was a guy at the side of the road who seemed to be there to give that final bit of encouragement to the runners, and as he jogged alongside he said "If it's cramp you've got then you need to keep moving or you're f****d". That was all I needed to keep me going for the final stretch. Down the road, past the church and there was Chris' mum taking photos and shouting encouragement. I could see the finish banner and there was Gemma with the camera ready to get that finish line moment. As I passed under the finish banner I gave a 6 sign to Gemma and that was that - triathlon number 6, and my longest to date, completed.

Footnote: the reason why Presh was behind Chris was because a Royal Mail van had been parked in front of a turn sign on the bike course and he ended up doing something like 24 miles instead of 18.