

**ITU World Long Course Triathlon Championships**  
**25 October 2009**  
**Perth, Western Australia**

**3km Swim**  
**80km Bike**  
**20km Run**

The tourist brochures of Perth show an idyllic destination, friendly people, sun, calm and crystal clear waters, white sand and bikini clad babes.

Well that's all very well if you want to lie around on a beach all day on the days when the wind **ISN'T** blowing. Perth is a beautiful city, drenched in sun and positioned perfectly to cop the raging easterlies off the desert and the horrendous westerlies off the ocean – having accumulated in intensity all the way from Bl—dy Africa!

So here we are then, Sunday morning, 25 October 2009. 6.00am, draw back the curtains of the hotel room 5 floors up overlooking the course and HELLO! Friggin white caps on the river and the palm trees doubled over like ostriches with their heads in the sand. The promotional flags were flying horizontal in perfect formation as if wire was holding them in place to ensure the logos were clear to be seen and enjoyed by all. But hey, the sun was shinning! My roomies and I just looked at each other bug-eyed and simultaneously muttered "C R A P"

So cutting to the chase – the organizers had co-ordinated a 'wave' start format, by which races began in groups of about 70-100 people at one time. In their wisdom, they sent older age groups first, so that these folk got totally mown down by the younger/faster athletes departing at later gun times. So, I tootled up to the start line, quite calm, relaxed and ready to rumble as far out to the right as I could – in fact I was on the line in the front with not a soul on my right. My wave consisted of women 35-44yrs. The hooter was muffled by the raging wind and we were left discussing the merits of actually departing just in case it had gone off. Then we just went. I was with the front group of about 10 girls for what seemed a long time, swimming up, then down, then up, then down...over the waves of course! I was chuffed with my progress, felt as though I was in control without bursting a foo foo valve and then suddenly, hello, we started worming our way through the last of the group in front of us, and that's where I lost my mojo. I was being nice weaving around the other athletes, then suddenly realized I had lost the other girls with the green caps on (my swim start colour) – they had shot the gap and I was left to my own pace judgment. I continued on, being nice, and swam the longest 1800m of chop in my life. It was tough going but I was passing people at an incredible pace so felt good about my progress. After an all out brawl with a young lad in the swim start wave behind me at the turn, I calmed myself down to continue to the exit 1.2km away..... wind behind me but into the current. It seemed to take forever and I was seriously doubting my ability to swim 3.8km in 6 weeks time in IMWA! Finally, I exited the water and could not believe how tired I was – usually I just bolt into transition like a scalded cat, but I slowly jogged and felt pretty rough. Turns out, I was not alone in that department. Everyone was buggered. (Swim Time 52mins – eek – recent pool TT was 46mins!) I was 8<sup>th</sup> in agegroup out of water.

Onto the bike and I really started to enjoy myself! Not famous for my strength in the wind, I just kept telling myself to "find a hole and put your head into it" – That is what IM legend Natasha Badman says about the winds in Hawaii – so I found that hole, put my head in and went for it. Felt strong most of the way and really enjoyed the course that hammered itself along the freeway in the central city. I was hammered too – the wind was unbelievable – my top speed was 50.6kph, slowest speed 21kph – and the course was FLAT! Highlight of the race was having the pro women pass me and seeing Rebecca Keats sucking the wheel of the chic in front – such BLATANT drafting – I felt that she deserved her disqualification in Hawaii on that basis. Just downright RUDE. The drafting zone was 12m believe it or not, and she would have been no more than 1m off the wheel! Oh to see a draft buster when you need one. Ozzies, ay!

Anyway, I was feeling pretty proud of my efforts in the wind, given my struggles in Hawaii 2 years ago, and came into transition at a great rate of knots as I had practiced, swung my leg over and scooted in over the dismount line and jumped off – OH MY GOD! I nearly face planted – my legs just wouldn't communicate with the brain and I felt like my femurs had been ram-rodged into my torso! I regained my composure, solely through vanity I am sure, and ran like a drunk into transition. My transition splits were excellent, 2<sup>nd</sup> fastest in age group in T1, and near the top in T2. I think the delay in T2 was brain fog. I finished the bike leg in 11<sup>th</sup> place in age group.

So I exit T2 thinking quite seriously that I must be the SLOWEST person on the course right now, because my legs still were not responding to the instructions provided by the brain. The people in front of me were actually INFRONT of me because they were BEATING me – I had passed most of the slower people already in the swim and on the bike. They all looked SO fast. OMG. I really, really struggled with this mentally....as the crowd went wild! The support on the course was amazing – a real pleasure to part of. The sun was now BAKING, and reports of 38 degrees would be pretty close to the mark. I never felt hot, I just couldn't get the legs to function...anyway, moving on. I told myself to keep running, stay hydrated, and "babe, you are SO going to run all these losers down because they are running way too fast!" It turned out I was right. I just kept on keeping on, and by the 3<sup>rd</sup> lap (4 x 5km laps) many people were walking and I was passing shit loads as they stopped at aid stations. I have the 'pro' hydration strategy down to a fine art and just threw the fluid at my open mouth and kept running. Yes, OK, it goes everywhere and some times you choke, but it's not a fashion parade and as Tony O'Hagen said to me, (as he slapped my arse so hard whilst passing me like the concorde on the bike) – "Come on Ali, we're not here to poke spiders!" And those that were faster? – They were simply never to be seen again!

So the run continued. I just ticked over the k's, slowly but surely, and before I knew it I was on the home straight. I had been keeping my eye on some kiwi girls that were trying to catch me, and apart from a few, held them all at bay – luckily those that caught me were not in my agegroup. I am sad that I was unable to hold on to my 11<sup>th</sup> placing off the bike, but feel pleased that not more than 6 girls passed me in what turned out to be a very slow run. I finished the run in 1hr 56mins and crossed the line in 17th place in the 40-44yr age group (from 42 starters).

All my splits were slow – I was aiming for a 4hr 50min finish time, but the wind reduced me to a crumbling 5hrs 17mins. This last sentence will be written in race reports from all those who participated – we were ALL slower than our true potential. What a day!

I was proud to be wearing a very smart 2XU New Zealand race suit, and enjoyed the race immensely – it was right up there with IM Taupo 2008 for enjoyment factor. The "GO Ali" and "GO Kiwi" calls were amazing! Such a buzz! And a sunny day makes any day feel good! On reflection, the mouth of the hurt box was a little too small and I didn't jump into it as much as I could have. But maybe someone upstairs was looking after me...I have Ironman Western Australia in December and I know that that hurt box will be bigger than Ben Hur..... here I come...wish me well!

I want to thank everyone at the Hibiscus Coast Harriers and Triathlon Club for their relentless support and help, and my training buddies Pam, Wayne and Nick. You made it all so much fun. And special thanks to Sheryl – it is so nice to have someone organize EVERYTHING for me, for once! Love ya!

Ali Babes

**Vital Statistics:**

3km Swim : 52.51 ; 8<sup>th</sup> fastest in age group

80km Bike : 2.24.59; 14<sup>th</sup> fastest in age group (exited bike course in 11<sup>th</sup> position)

20km Run : 1.55.49 ; 25<sup>th</sup> fastest in age group

Total Time: 5hrs 17min 31 sec and a lucky 17<sup>th</sup> in 40-44yr age group.

First Kiwi Home in age group

12<sup>th</sup> overall from 39 Kiwi Women

9<sup>th</sup> swim from 39 kiwi women

11<sup>th</sup> bike from 39 Kiwi women

27<sup>th</sup> run from 39 kiwi women (ouch)

98<sup>th</sup> overall from 258 women

56<sup>th</sup> swim from 258 women

81<sup>st</sup> Bike from 258 Women

160<sup>th</sup> Run from 258 Women (ouch)

**See my race pics online at :**

[http://www.marathon-photos.com/scripts/event\\_entry.py?event=Sports/JRAU/2009/ITU World Long Distance Tri Champs;match=410](http://www.marathon-photos.com/scripts/event_entry.py?event=Sports/JRAU/2009/ITU World Long Distance Tri Champs;match=410)