

SOUTH AFRICAN TRIATHLON CHAMPIONSHIPS 2018-RACE REPORT



- U19** Andoni Mutzuris (C), Jamie-Lee Soper (C), Katie Dilmitis
U17 Matthew Denslow, Marcel Paulser, Ben Wood
U15 Luke Hacker, Luke Steffens, Mathew Palmer, Jordyn Jacobs, Keith Elliott, Jayden Young, Erin Elliott
U13 George Ascot

On Thursday 15 March a team of 15 athletes, Tammy Benade as manager and myself as coach departed Robert Gabriel International Airport to Johannesburg and then drove to Maselspoort near Bloemfontein for the SA Triathlon Championships 2018.

This was the first year in many that a fundraising committee lead by Tracey Jacobs had raised funds to cover the manager and coaches' expenses to reduce the costs paid by the athletes.

This year the team consisted of 3 U19s (2 girls), 3 U17, 8 U15 (1 girl) and 1 U13. Noted once again is the absence of U13 girls.

We arrived at Maselspoort late Thursday afternoon after travelling through rain and on dirt road so many bags and bikes were covered in mud. After settling into our chalets which were to be home for the next few nights, we proceeded to assemble bikes. All meals had been pre ordered and they were excellent.

Friday 16th March – pre race day

Bike orientation

The race organizers very kindly organized a lead vehicle for the Zim team for our bike orientation. Both captains, Andoni Mutzuris and Jamie-Lee Soper were unable to assist with the recce so I was very grateful for the vehicle. Andoni had bike issues which could only be fixed later in the day and Jamie –Lee had left Harare very sick and was unable to exercise pre race and we were uncertain as to whether she would be able to race the following day.

The bike course was the same as two years ago so many of these athletes were familiar with the course. The course was fairly flat once you had climbed out of the dam and not technical so everyone was happy with the bike leg. The mount and dismount was more technical so time was spent practicing these.

On returning to our accommodation we had a group stretch session led by myself and Jamie-Lee. This helped everyone relax a bit and ask any questions they were unsure of on the bike leg.

Swim Orientation

Due to no water safety yet, I paired everyone up and they were responsible for their team mate during the swim recce. The swim was in a muddy river where visibility was non-existent. Andoni lead the Juniors and I lead the Youth category. Some athletes new to open water swimming were a bit unsure in the river but they all coped well on race day.

After lunch and a group pre race chat, the captains organized a Triathlon specific quiz and a Captains Tea which has now become tradition after being introduced last year. This really helps to settle and relax everyone.

Run Orientation

The official orientation was at 4:30pm so we joined everyone for the run recce. Those who are used to running the day before an event could run whilst everyone else rode the course. Both courses were completely flat but with lots of twists and turns for the juniors. Andoni lead the Juniors again whilst I led the Youth.

Kit inspection was scheduled before dinner, unlike in previous years where it has been after dinner and everyone is tired and wants to go straight to bed. This worked well. Lights were out early as it was an early breakfast and catching a bus at 7:30 to briefing 6km away at a Game reserve.

Race Day

Transition opened after briefing at 10:20-11.00 so it was a rush back to the race venue. **The Youth Boys** race commenced at 11:30. Luke Hacker had an exceptional swim and exited the water first followed shortly by Keith Elliott and Jordyn Jacobs. Keith and Jordyn worked well together on the bike and entered Transition 2 in first place. Jordyn having worked too hard on the bike unfortunately could not push through on the run. Keith pushed hard and crossed the line in 2nd place to win silver in the U15 category. Keith is bottom of the category age wise so he has a bright future ahead of him. Luke Hacker finished 5th whilst Luke Steffens pulled through to 6th position. George Ascot racing for the first time for Zimbabwe in the U13 category won a bronze medal.

The **Youth Girls** race started at 11:40. Erin Elliott competing for Zimbabwe and she entered transition 2 in first place overall and proceeded to win the race a minute ahead of her next rival.

Whilst the Youth were racing, the Juniors were warming up and Tammy was at the penalty box to ensure all our athletes knew if they had received a penalty. Fortunately none of our athletes were awarded any.

The **Junior Boys** commenced their race at 12:10. Here we had Andoni competing in the U19 category and Matt Denslow, Marcel Paulser and Ben Wood competing in the U17 category. Marcel exited the water half way through the field with Matt close behind. Matt looked a bit flat out the water and entered the wrong chute to his bike losing a little time there. Ben unfortunately being a Triathlon rookie made a mistake he will hopefully never make again.

Having his wetsuit on inside out made it extremely difficult to take off but somehow he miraculously did and commenced his race. Andoni had a rough start to his swim with his cap and goggles getting knocked off. He was diagnosed with a concussion on his return home. Fortunately he safely managed to complete his race.

Matt pulled his race back together after not such a great swim and managed to podium in Bronze position.

The **Junior Girls** race began 10 minutes later and here Zimbabwe had Jamie-Lee who fortunately had been given the go ahead to race by Dr Jeans and Katie Dilmitis competing. It was exciting to see Zimbabwe back on the podium with 4 medals, 1 gold, 1 silver and 2 bronze.

I was proud to be a part of this team as every person gave their all whilst racing. They continued to show good sportsmanship and spirit by staying to the end to watch the Para and Age Group races and medal ceremony.

Post race

The following day everyone watched the age group athletes race, packed our bikes and then watched the elites race. That evening as per tradition was 'initiation' time. This is a time where in the past Tammy and I leave the seniors in charge to have fun initiating the juniors.

REVIEW

- Tammy and I made an executive decision to remove all cell phones whilst on tour. This at first created a reaction by some parents so we decided to allow cell use in the morning and again in the evening. This worked really well and I would recommend it again. I would ensure everyone knows beforehand that this is going to happen so everyone can prepare accordingly.
- There has been talk of the seniors hitting the juniors with sticks in the past during initiation, so we made one rule 'no hitting is allowed'. This apparently was not adhered to. Maybe in future rules need to be laid down? Also there seems to be a grey area as to who can be involved in the initiation. I strongly feel that none members of the team cannot be involved in the initiation.
- Having been made aware prior to tour of the increasing consumption of alcohol and smoking amongst juniors, we made it clear to all the athletes that these substances were forbidden on tour, and if found in their possession they would be dealt with accordingly.

PAMELA FULTON

COACH'S REPORT – SA CHAMPS 2018