

## **African Triathlon Championships Rabat Morocco 2018- Race report**

A number of selected athletes chose not to travel to Rabat.

### **Travelling Team**

#### **Juniors YOG Qualifier (17-19)**

Women: Mikayla Colegrave, Andie Kuipers

Men: Matthew Denslow, Marcel Paulser

#### **Youth (15-17yr)**

Boys: Luke Steffens, Luke Hacker, Mathew Palmer

**Manager/ Coach:** Pamela Fulton

**Itinerary:** Departed 17 April 2018 - Harare-Nairobi-Paris-Rabat

The team travelled together excluding Mikayla. She was joining the team a day later in Rabat. The Paris-Rabat flight was cancelled. The team stayed in Paris airport for 10hrs then flew to Casablanca and bussed into Rabat, arriving 12:30am 19/4/18, arriving 10hrs behind schedule.

2 suitcases did not arrive - eventually arrived on the afternoon of 20/4. Luke Hacker and Luke Steffens had to travel back to Casablanca (3hr round trip) to collect them personally the afternoon before their race.

#### **Accommodation**

Most National teams stayed in the race head quarters hotel 20km from race venue. All meals were provided at the hotel. Breakfast consisted of bread (Continental style) so surplus food was required for race day. All other meals were nutritious and adequate.

#### **Course Familiarisation - 20/4/18**

Athletes rode to venue but transport had to be arranged for the return as it was too far for athletes to ride the day before race day.

Bike-4 laps of 5km out and back (Juniors), 2 laps (Youth)

Flat and fast with 500m through a tunnel in each direction each lap. This was a novelty for our athletes.

Swim-1 lap of 750m out and back in a tidal Estuary (Juniors), 375m (Youth).

Temperature 15,9' so a wetsuit Swim.

The athletes, in particular Matt, were apprehensive at first but seemed more confident at the end of Swim recce.

Run- race day 3 laps of 1,75km (Juniors), 2 laps (Youth), flat and fast.

For some unknown reason the athletes were not given the opportunity to recce this.

A lift was organized back to the hotel and bikes arrived safely.

### **Briefing**

The afternoon consisted of registration, kit inspection and briefing, a light stretch and time to focus on tomorrow's race.

Andie went for a light run as this is part of her usual pre race preparation.

### **Race Day - 21/4/2018**

Sunrise:	6:55am
Start Junior Boys:	7am
Start Junior Girls:	8:30am
Start Youth Boys:	12:00
Water temperature:	15,9'
Tide-high for Juniors	
Boys total:	33 Juniors, 4 Youth
Girls total:	26 Juniors

Transport departed hotel at 5am but not enough vehicles were provided for the bikes so a couple of shuttles were required. This created stress for the athletes. The start of the Junior Boys race was delayed to 7:30 due to lack of road closure.

### **Junior Men's race**

Marcel and Matt completed their warm up in adequate time.

7:20-athlete introduction followed by water entry whereby athletes had to swim across to a rope and hold onto it for the race start.

The weaker swimmers were swept downstream and battled to get back to the rope hence a further delay in start while some started to freeze and others were exhausted.

The horn went and all were swept down to the turn buoy. Once around the buoy the pack split and the stronger swimmers pulled away. Marcel and Matt exited in 18 and 19 position 2:45min behind the leaders. They worked hard together on the bike in a pack of 4 until Marcel fell of the pack and had to time trial home. Matt continued to push the pace and posted the 2nd fastest bike split of the YOG qualifiers. He had a fast transition and posted the 4th fastest run split to finish 10th overall and 7th YOG qualifier missing the qualifying slot by 45 seconds.

Marcel finished 20th overall and 15th YOG qualifier.

### **Junior Ladies race**

The athletes entered the water on time but had the same start issues as the men's race. The kayaks had to assist with bringing the ladies back to the start before the gun could go.

Andie and Mikayla exited the water in 12 and 13 place respectively.

Andie got into a pack of 3 and Mikayla had to time trial on her own.

Andie's pack consisted of a Moroccan, an Egyptian and a Zimbabwean. Whoever won out of these 3 girls would win the 3rd slot to YOG. RSA and Tunisia were ahead. The 3 nations finished the bike leg together which made for a very exciting run. Andie had possibly done too much work on the bike compared to her 2 counterparts.

All 3 ladies finished the first lap together and the Moroccan fell off the pack on the 2nd lap. Andie and the Egyptian finished the 2nd lap together and the Egyptian made

a break which Andie could not respond to due to her lack of run training building up to the qualifier due to the growth related injury she had carried for the last few months.

Andie finished 9th overall and 7th YOG qualifier with Mikayla 1 position behind her.

Our Junior athletes raced exceptionally hard putting everything into their race but once again showing the Swim leg is our weakness and we are extremely competitive with the rest of Africa in the bike and run legs.

Without the ability to practice open water swimming on a regular basis it will always be a challenge mentally and physically for our athletes to be competitive in the Swim leg.

I am exceptionally proud of this Zimbabwean team who put so much into their pre race preparations and gave everything they had on race day.

Due to Andie and Matt's performance at Africa Champs, they have both been offered a place on an African Development camp to be held in June in France.

### **Youth Boys race**

For the Youth Boys race, the start had been changed to prevent the same issues experienced in the Junior and Elite races. They had a dry start where they could swim straight down to the turn-around Buoy. Luke Hacker exited the water first but had problems putting his helmet on and lost valuable time to his rivals who entered transition just as he managed to clip his helmet up and exit T1. Luke Steffens and Mat Palmer worked together on the bike and managed to catch Luke Hacker. The other competitor was from Mauritius and he was far back in 4<sup>th</sup> position. The 3 Zimbabweans entered T2 together which made for an exciting run. Luke Hacker was unable to match the pace of his fellow Zimbabweans and Luke Steffens managed to pull away from Mat to finish in first place.

It was an exciting race for our 3 Youth boys who all podiumed. They had a great experience where valuable lessons will have been learnt and will be taken forward to future racing.



**Departure:** 22/4/2018

**Itinerary:** Rabat-Paris-Nairobi-Harare

Paris-Nairobi flight cancelled, Rescheduled Rabat-Paris-Addis Ababa-Harare

The team returned to the same hotel for the night courtesy of the Moroccan Triathlon Federation and departed for the airport at 4am on 23/4/2018

The team stayed another 12 hrs in Paris airport

Team arrived home 24hrs behind schedule 24/4/2018 with 2 bikes missing - they were eventually located and collected.

**PAMELA FULTON**

**COACH'S REPORT – AFRICA CHAMPIONSHIPS 2018**