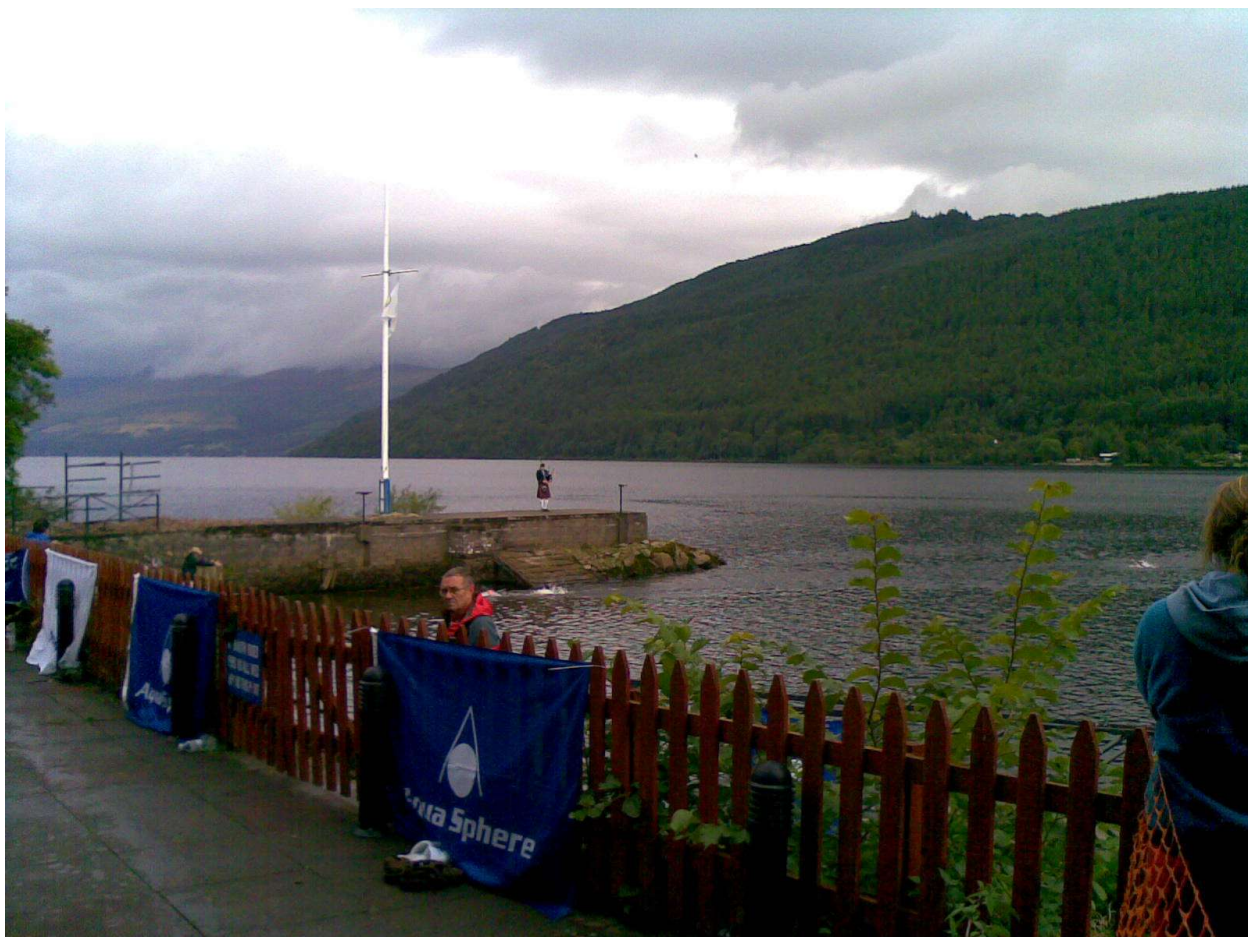


## ABERFELDY HIM 2008 RACE REPORT

### You Don't Know How Hard is Too Hard, Until You Blow!

Or, Fortune Favours the Brave!

Or, my particular favourite, Stupid is as Stupid does.



Don't worry, all will become clear? This weekend was the 3rd leg of the UK HIM Tour for Mick and I; the Aberfeldy Middle Distance race in the Highlands of Scotland. Whilst I had the easy option of flying to Edinburgh and a couple of hours drive Mick was faced with a 900 mile round trip; the things we do for our sport. Not the best race prep.

I enjoyed this race well its location and toughness, another one along with Bala I believe a few from our club should do (I know Bryce is thinking about them). The swim is in Loch Tay; although dark the water is crystal clear and this year it was officially 12.5 degrees. Cold enough to take your breath away when your first got in but OK once you were swimming. The bike is 92km of the complete cycling challenge; tough climbs that are both steep and long; technical descents; amazing descents; scary fast descents; constantly varying terrain; some flat bits (but not much); and stunning scenery. The run is 21km of undulating Scottish scenery. In short, it is a brilliant race.

So how did it go?

The swim was fine and I was out of the water in a little over 37 minutes; very happy with that considering it took me 43 at Bala I'm really noticing my swim times coming down still not enough to be in the top ¼ out of the water. As is usual I had a fairly quick T1, made longer this time by the

addition of putting on arm warmers for the first time in a race. And no, I hadn't practised it beforehand. And no, they don't slide easily over wet skin. Mick had had a good swim but a slower T1 as he was wrapping up a little more than me ready for the wet/windy weather that was to greet us on the bike, but Mick just edged out of T1 ahead although I got to the mount line before him.

Onto the bike and Mick quickly put me in my place by overtaking me after a few hundred metres. I ignored this as I had a race plan and was sticking to this (Wish I did later on the Run) There is a couple of miles of flat and fast road and a chance to get a gel and some drink down before you hit the first hill (is Schiehallion a hill or a mountain?), all 8km of it! The gradient varies and there are a couple of false summits and brief down hills but it is essentially skywards for 8km. I was riding my road bike with a compact chain set and made plenty of use of the 34-25 lowest gear, spinning easily up the hill and avoiding going "into the red". At the top you head towards Loch Rannoch but there is some more climbing before you start the descent; this is a very technical descent with a lot of blind corners and hairpin bends, meaning you never get a chance to really build up speed and your bike handling skills are well tested. Alongside the loch and I was not feeling too good think Mourne sportive was still in my legs I wanted to reach the far end of the loch (approx halfway point) in less than 1:30 and I got there in 1:27:00. Woo hoo! However, my joy was short-lived; as I turned the corner I realised I had been pushed along by a fairly sizeable wind and simply hadn't realised it, and this wind would now be in my face for almost the whole of the return leg. Never mind, head down and get on with it. It was about this time that I felt that even though I had overtaken a few people and was working hard I just didn't feel good my legs were heavy I was battling with these demons for a while. I was wondering if I had kept Mick within a close enough distance that I could do him on the run, to my delight I went passed Mick I was clearly having a good ride, but it just did not feel like it. I now had a sizeable lead on Mick and was worried that I was over cooking so eased off a little. Mick was obviously working a little harder as eventually he caught me up on the steepest climb back up Schiehallion. This is tough and Mick and I climbed it together (with due respect for the drafting rules, of course, although what draft effect is there at 13kmh?). I got to the top about 10m in front of Mick and we headed onto the 8km descent; the first part is fairly open with good visibility of the road, then you get a short uphill before a steeper, more technical descent with tight, blind corners. On the first part I had a clear edge; for this first part, the speed never dropped below 50kmh and was more often above 60. After the short uphill we hit the technical part and Mick's better knowledge of the course allowed him to get ahead; this is an AWESOME descent, banking the bike into corners at 60kmh and trying to accelerate out of them, trying to make it flow smoothly. At the bottom of the hill there is about a 5 mile run in to Aberfeldy and T2, and Mick decided to make a break for it and got his head down for some serious TT action. He quickly dropped me and blew passed another competitor I stuck to my game plan and at this point was spinning my legs out for the run. I got to T2 about 15 seconds behind Mick but again had a slightly quicker T2 Mick had about 10 meters on me.

Onto the run and I was off like a scalded cat, setting a seriously hot pace straight out of the trap Within the first mile I must have pulled out some 200m or so and after stretching it a little more in the next half mile it started to stabilise. Game plan Negative split I kept saying to myself. But then Mick was starting to catch me (Stick to the plan) to be honest, I felt ok, but Mick was still catching. With markers every mile I hit my lap timer at mile 1 and the next miles were reeled off in 7:15, 7:20, 7:25, and 7:30. I was feeling ok and even began to contemplate whether my HIM run PB may be on. By this time Mick had caught me and after going passed me decided it would be a good idea to put in an effort to try and break me, and ran the next mile in 7:40 with the main effort being on a long incline. This is where it all started to go wrong I neglected my race plan and thought im not having that so stuck with Mick and flew past him at the next feed station where I decided not to stop. Mmmm. Mick had decided to stop for a little water after all his effort I decided I would try

and put a little distance between us again. I reached the turnaround point in 50 minutes so my run PB was certainly on. After the turnaround point there was a short downhill and then a long gentle incline, but as I demanded more from my body to pull away from Mick I started to feel the legs going OH Shit not again. So at mile 9 I was slowing down and the thoughts of Bala were returning. I tried to stay positive I could not see Mick a good 300 meters behind me so I had to just keep going. The next miles were covered in times like 8.30, 9.29, 9.38, and 10.09 last. The last mile just being awful, the sun was coming out and the crowds were cheering I so wanted to stop but was not walking in front of the crowds. Christ it wrecked. These Half Ironmen are tough. There is, though, an interesting postscript to this. Micks efforts in running me down and overtaking me, and then pushing on had forced Mick to compromise his own race strategy and he well and truly blew at the half way point. What I didn't know was that as my race was falling apart Micks already had, in similarly spectacular style!

At the finish I was completely spent! After a little time collecting my thoughts Mick crossed the line came and told me his own sorry story and we both had a right laugh about how stupid we both were. I was running well until Mick had caught me But, I now know that I should be able to run at this sort of pace and provided I am sensible and don't go mad then a run PB should be achievable. Another lesson learnt run your own race.

### Splits:

	Swim	T1	Bike	T2	Run	Total	Position Overall	Position Age Group
<b>Mick</b>	<b>36:19</b>	<b>3:46</b>	<b>3:03:10</b>	<b>1:07</b>	<b>1:53:42</b>	<b>5:38:07</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Reg</b>	<b>37:17</b>	<b>2:50</b>	<b>3:03:27</b>	<b>1:03</b>	<b>1:50:06</b>	<b>5:34:45</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>29</b>

On this occasion fortune did not favour the brave; or perhaps it wasn't bravery but stupidity. And how stupid was I (or indeed, were we?) to try and make a break for it when still 7 miles from home? At least I tried.

I have 2 more races this year – Dublin on 24<sup>th</sup> Aug and then the final leg of the HIM UK Tour at the Half-Ireman on 13 Sep.

Looking forward to it.