



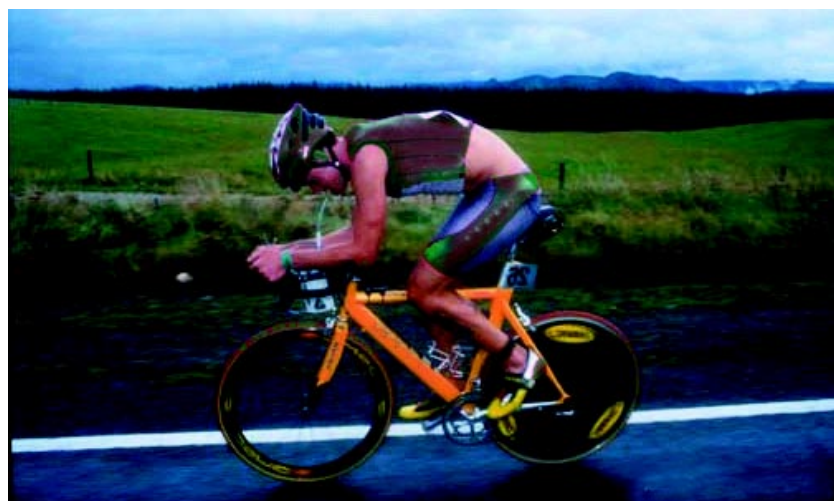
Friday

Hand in your bikes, is everything on it, are all your gu's/food/whatever on it? Is it covered in case it rains? Because it rained all right. I bought myself a waterproof, snug fitting sleeveless top just in case it rained tomorrow. Oh I must say thank you to Dorothy (who navigated me through the bike hand in) a cuddly grandma from Vancouver who comes every year to Taupo to help in the Ironman with her friend. They have two holidays a year, in NZ and Pentichton, and spend 4 days of the holiday helping. These people are the real Ironmen and women along with the other 1598 people who gave up their free time to ensure we could fulfil our ambition. All done now then, just a night's sleep, then bingo.

Saturday

As expected it wasn't a great night, it rained and I had set the alarm clock for 4.45 PM, luckily Kathy woke up at 05.30 and we whisked Adam off still drowsy in the drizzle to the start. First check the bike, take off the wrappers, blow up the tyres and fill the water bottles, then off to the swim start to get ready. 06.45 and Jock and myself are all kitted out in wetsuit and yellow swim caps and... The find of the IM, our new goggles, I kid you not, these things are amazing and even Alex, who is more set in his ways than concrete, changed his on the day. If you need a set come and see us we brought 6 pairs back for sale for the tri season. Anyway 5 minutes to go and we are in the water bobbing about like seals, "good luck Alex."

"Good luck Charlie." Then BANG! Off goes the cannon and 2150 arms start thrashing the lake and we're on the way. My game plan was to draft someone and swim a few minutes faster than last year. I did manage to draft a little and the swim wasn't too traumatic but out I came at 1 :08, slower than last year, however a slightly faster transition, even with wet weather gear saw me on the road at 1 : 15, and 18 minutes in front of Jock.



To cycle 180 kms in 5:30 requires an average speed of 33 km/hr, imagine my delight when I finished the first 90 km at an average of 33.8 km/hr. everything was going to plan, even though the rain was persistent, I was at 4 hours and gaining on Jock, I had even managed a big smile for the official photographer. Oh, how fickle weather can be, the wind came up and the rain came down some more, the next 90 kms were a little more taxing than the first, and even though the people along the route were out in force and cheering like mad, my average went down to 31.5 km/hr, and my legs hurt a little too, as I clambered off my bike and beeped through the electronic check at 7:06. Only a sub 4 hour marathon needed to break 11 hours, and almost 30 minutes on Jock. It hurt, but the sun came out and it got very warm, and the spectators and volunteers cheered and clapped every athlete. Kathy had managed to get Adam fed and sorted out as well as having him there when Daddy passed, it's a good motivator, love and support, and I had it in buckets. I wasn't getting any faster though and as expected, at 29 km, Jock came skipping past, looking in fine fettle. I must admit I considered stopping at least 3 times, but never did. People passed me and I passed a few too. I came down the finishing chute on my own at 11:37:24, 17 minutes faster than 2001 and 18 minutes behind Alex who had a good race, and an even better holiday. Overall I came in the top 40% and finished comparatively higher in my age group. Alex was 6th in his age group (50-54), where a world record 10:07 was set. Cameron Brown repeated his win of last year, and the Kiwi girls, led by Karyn Balance, had a field day with the 1 St, 2nd and 3rd places.

Kathy and I will both be back racing next year, we've already booked, and Alex is having a year out and has said he may try IMNZ 2004. So it's back to the training schedule and we are both looking forward to the 2002 tri season. Next year you should come to Taupo and be part of an amazing event, in an amazing setting and witness the unforgettable Ironman experience first-hand because it has to be seen and done to be believed. Whether it's your first time or you're an old hand it's a place well worth seeing.