

PINK PANTHER STRIKES AGAIN



It's the morning of the race. I had been awake since 3.30am and couldn't get back to sleep. All I could hear was the growling wind outside. I just layed in bed, waiting. I got up at 5.10am and started to get ready. I was staying with Josh (*The Big Fella*), Matt (*White Lightning*) and Renee.

Not many words were said between the four of us. I just pondered my thoughts about the tough day ahead of me. The Big Fella lost his timing chip and had to run back into transition looking for it, lucky he found it in his shoe.

Then down to the water for go time. We said out goodbyes and were ready to rumble.

When I got into the Hastings, I felt some of my nerves wash away. It all happened so fast. I gave Renee a hug and before I knew it, the gun went off and we were swimming for our lives.

I tried to find my own space in the water. There were so many arms and legs in my way. I soon realised, it's *all for one and one for all*. I was going to get through this swim and I didn't care how many people I swam into or wacked in the head.

It was a great feeling getting to that boat ramp and running into transition. I tried to give my Dad a smile for the camera and then hopped on my bike. As I headed out of town it was great hearing the crowd cheer me on. The first 10km of the bike I felt tired already. I knew I had to get some nutrition in and harden up. I had a long ride to go. The wind was so strong. It really took it out of me. I was glad to see other riders were finding it hard like me. I kept talking to myself to get me through it.

The second lap of the bike course felt even harder. I made use of the tail wind on the straight because I knew I would be crawling back the other way. With 10km to go I couldn't wait to get back into town and get off my bike. But then I realised I still had a 21.1km run to go.



I changed my shoes, got some sunscreen and high fived my 2 little cousins and off I went. My legs didn't feel too sore on the run, but I just felt exhausted physically. I didn't have much left in the tank after all that wind on the bike. I saw the big fella glued onto the back of Pete. Funny, I am pretty sure he was glued onto The Champ on the ride. I think he was on his last lap as he was almost at a crawl. Knowing he was nearly finished didn't make me feel any better. I walked the aid stations but still felt tired. I was feeling sick from all the Gu's I had taken too.

The sun was hammering down and I had nearly given up along the Breakwall, but Rhino came running past and saw that I was struggling, he told me to drink Coke at the aid station. I took his advice and I instantly felt better. I had 2 laps down and 1 to go. I saw Josh as I collected my orange wrist band for my last lap. He ran most of the last lap with me for support (was probably the fastest he had run all day from what I saw earlier).



By this stage, my emotions were at tipping point. I shed a few tears with 5 km to go - I just wanted it to be over. My legs were gone, it was getting hotter and I still wasn't done. I didn't understand how a sport could make you so emotional but now I do. Triathlon is not only a physical struggle, it is just as much a mental struggle too. I sucked it up and pushed along the Breakwall for the last time and up hill.

Finally I was running past the Country Comfort for the last time. I couldn't believe I was going to go down the finish chute. I heard people cheering my name. I got to the blue carpet and crossed the line. I got draped in my towel of glory. It was the best feeling I have ever felt, to accomplish something so great. Not that many people can say they have done a Half Ironman. It was worth all the pain and suffering I had endured on the day and in training for this race.

Port Macquarie was a hard race. Hard course, harsh conditions, but I did it and I finished it. My time was **6 hours 40 minutes**. A bit slower than what I hoped for, but I'm so proud of myself for doing it. I now have the motivation to come back *fitter, faster* and *stronger* for the 70.3 next year.