

BUCS Sprint 2014

Apparently, the most important thing you need to know how to do to compete in the BUCS triathlon is count to thirty. As two of our top swimmers could contest, this is remarkably harder than it seems in a dimly-lit, overcrowded pool. For many members of the Oxford University Triathlon Club competing in the BUCS triathlon at St Mary's School, Calne, this was their first real tri-sport event. The team set off in two waves divided by swim times—culminating with our most promising swimmers setting off to go last. With a total of 32 athletes to Cambridge's more modest 17, Oxford promises an exciting Varsity race and mob match next week!

As far as a first race could have gone, this was the perfect induction to triathlons. For those who have never raced before, senior team members made it an inclusive and accessible event that proved not only an individual challenge but an exercise in team bonding. Stellar performances included not just veteran triathletes (**Andy Dyson, Alec Watson, Laura Fenwick, Marie McHugh and Georgina Hellier**) but some remarkable results from newcomers: **Luke Sperry** smashed the swim despite not being able to count to thirty, **Imogen Kempton** drew an impressive cycle time for a first-timer, while New Zealander **Tom Quirk** recorded the fastest Oxford and Cambridge 5km time! Despite the early morning start and minor quibbles with vehicles locked in the Iffley car park, both waves worked together to cheer each other on and support team spirit in preparation for Varsity next week.

On a more personal note, as someone who had never competing in a triathlon, I found this race to be first and foremost a great experience in what it meant to be part of a team. Most importantly, it washed away the fears of coming off my bike or tripping over my shoes in transition, and left me with a desire to train more and harder. The combination of pool swim, marginally undulating 25km cycle course and fast and flat 5km, in addition to uncommonly warm British sunshine provided for a fantastic first race. I must say that having done all other combinations of multi-sport events (Freshers' aquathlon, BUCS and Varsity Duathlons) helped immensely in terms of this race: I felt prepared for transitions and had an idea of how these events were run. Though I opted for shoes off the bike in T1 and on the bike in T2, I found that the transition practices held by the club and at training camp were immensely useful: I had gone from being terrified of "clippy shoes" to being able to perfectly mount & dismount a bike in one session—a real tangible learning curve! What I did not anticipate after quite a lonely bike leg was the amount of support from the team at the transition area: I could hear my name being cheered from the moment I ran in with my bike, and found the team spirit pushed me to PB on my run. In turn, I used the last of my efforts after the race to participate in the 'pot and spoon' leg of the race, and cheered the rest of my team just as hard as they had cheered me.

With the excitement still lingering, I have high hopes for the Varsity race next weekend, from those aiming to win outright (come on, Oxford!) to those competing in their first ever open water event! There is a reason we won best club of the year - BUCS ended with smiles all around. Sincere thanks to all those who made May 4th yet another stellar club event: our President for running the show, **the two Toms** for sorting out race entries, and our drivers **Michael Hirst, Marie McHugh, Sam Banner and Andy Dyson** for getting us and our bikes there and back. Outstanding job one and all!