

Oxford University Triathlon Club

Race Report

BUCS Duathlon 2013



Each year, Castle Combe's BUCS "Chilly" Duathlon is the earliest race in OUTriC's race calendar, and a perfect opportunity for those looking to get a taste of multisport. A roughly "sprint" distance duathlon, it consists of a 2 mile run on mixed ground, followed by a 10 mile cycle of 5 laps around Castle Combe racetrack, then another 2 mile loop. Excellent, flat cycling surfaces on the racetrack are a joy to ride and can give immense speeds, while tight curves and a crowded track gives ample opportunity to hone technique. On Sunday a group of around 25 athletes from Oxford – consisting of seasoned multisport athletes and complete beginners alike – descended on Castle Combe to test themselves against university athletes from every corner of the UK.

Since it's on a closed road, BUCS Duathlon is a unique race in that it doesn't have start times that require athletes to get up at 5 in the morning. It's quite a novel to roll out of bed on the morning of a race at around 9am feeling raring to go. Despite having gotten a good night's sleep before a race for once, I still managed to drive my minibus in completely the wrong direction out of Oxford, and it was only noticed when one athlete spotted we were following signs for "The North". Having managed to rectify this, we arrived at the racetrack with plenty of time for registration, racking and the vital warm-up!



This "chilly" duathlon certainly lives up to its name, and although it wasn't quite the mud bath that the course was last year, conditions were certainly bitter. Despite this Oxford put on a fantastic effort and there were some very impressive results in both men's and women's categories. Andy Dyson (our very own club president) placed in an incredible 11th place out of 356 men, and Alec Watson (Men's Captain) came in at 32nd. As usual, Sophia Saller (women's captain) managed to chink the vast majority of the Oxford men's team, and managed to come in a strong 2nd place out of around 120 women entrants – but considering she was beaten only by the current age group triathlon world champion, I think we can forgive her. After all, there's a reason why she's described as "part-machine" by most of the club.

However, some unfortunate bike issues plagued a number of the athletes. Laura Fenwick, a fantastic athlete whose debut at the Fresher's Aquathlon set her among the top ladies in the club, unfortunately suffered a collision with another athlete, taking her out of contention within the first couple of laps. What's more, I had the unfortunate problem of having my seatpost come loose and slip down to its bottom level halfway through the race, resulting in me almost kneeling myself in the face. After riding for a few more minutes in "Harley Davidson" style, I spent around 5 minutes getting it sorted, I finished and gladly and humbly accepted last place in the club. Well, someone had to, I guess...

After packing up and collecting medals (although I am ashamed to say that I was so slow in the race that *they had run out of medals by the time I had finished*), the club returned home via a particularly scenic route, courtesy of Vincent Cheng's excellent navigation abilities, and everyone headed to a much-appreciated slap-up dinner at Zizzi's organized by our brilliant social secretary Sam Banner. Of course, special thanks should go to everyone involved in driving minibuses or vans, or in the general organization of the day. Props to Sam Banner who not only drove to and from the event AND organized the meal afterwards, but also was the only sensible person in the group to bring a bike pump, despite not even taking part in the race. Other thanks should go to Stephanie "granny driver" Jones, and of course all the committee members that helped organize the event – Tom Hughes and Andy Dyson in particular.

As we go into the winter months it's really encouraging to see some fantastic times from everyone involved. All eyes in the club are set on the next race in the calendar where we take on the Tabs one-on-one: Varsity Duathlon in February next year at Dorney Lake. But with one of "the worst winters in UK history" between now and then it'll be interesting to see what the winter holds in terms of training. Many thanks to everyone who came to race, and here's hoping for some more races like it!

