

Varsity Triathlon 2013

Oxford take on Cambridge at Grendon Triathlon, resulting in a 2-2 draw overall.

Triathletes are known for their ability to cope with early mornings and yesterday was no exception; at 5:30am on Sunday 26th May, 50 keen aero-helmet-clad athletes met in Oxford city centre ready for the race we had been training for all year. The sun was shining and the queue for the toilets was already formed when our troop of 6 vans arrived at Grendon Lakes. We registered and admired our free T-shirts before eyeing up our minty green rivals as we set up in transition. Fuelled up on High5 and other sugary, caffeinated products, we were ready to go.

The triathlon consisted of a 750m swim in a chilly 12°C lake, followed by an undulating 23km bike and a 5km run around the lake. With the sound of the klaxon at 9am, the Varsity wave had begun! Tom Hughes was out at the front, keen to stay away from the hustle and bustle of the main pack. So keen was Tom that he decided to get a little too close and personal with the first buoy, getting his wetsuit caught in the chain! Sophia Saller exited the swim first, closely followed by Cambridge's leading man. Morgan decided to leave his timing chip with the fishes so his overall time for the swim, according to the results, was 743 hours.

After the first transition, there were a number of accidents on the lane out of the lakes. Alec, already sporting an ankle injury and a broken hand, added to this with a couple of broken ribs after getting pulled down by a man in the 65+ category struggling to get his shoes on. Tim also had a cuddle with the tarmac at the first junction and somehow (no one really knows how yet) John Ash ended up in a hedge. Andy Dyson returned back after the bike as the first Oxford athlete with a 35min bike split and Sophia and Aussie Jordan hot on his heels.

Sophia sprinted around the run course to finish in a time of 1:11:36 – the fastest woman of the day by a huge margin. Georgina Hellier and Marie McHugh followed to make up the rest of the Blues Team. The men's first team, Andy Dyson (1:09:45), James Felce and Alec Watson narrowly lost to Cambridge by a margin of just 41secs, despite injury problems for all 3 athletes.

The women won by a convincing margin of over 7min, even without a contribution from Hannah, who very sensibly decided to sit out to protect her knee for the Europeans. The mob match was evenly split. Cambridge's total time for the women was 4mins faster than ours, whereas our men had a 1hour 25min faster combined time than the equivalent number of Cambridge men.

So, overall there were 2 very narrow victories for Cambridge and 2 very convincing wins for Oxford.

Perhaps best of all, Oxford entered over 50 competitors to Cambridge's 30, which reflects the explosion in participation we've had this year. All athletes celebrated finishing the triathlon (for many, it was their first!), by consuming copious amounts of calories at the BBQ after the event. And with that, the Varsity burger-eating and beer-drinking contests began...

