

## ITU World Triathlon Grand Final Cozumel Mexico by Grayhame Fish

ITU World Triathlon Grand Final Cozumel Mexico. What drama, several hours after Anne and I crossed the finish line in Cozumel, when the Brownlee brothers put on a fantastic display of sportsmanship. Such a wonderful advert for the sport of Triathlon.

This was Anne's 9<sup>th</sup> World Championships and my 4<sup>th</sup> and by some distance the toughest. Anne qualified by being 9<sup>th</sup> in Chicago last year (within 15<sup>th</sup> overall and first 3 GBs) but as I was a lowly 38<sup>th</sup> in Chicago I needed to seek qualification via the three qualification events. I did the Grafham Water Standard qualifier whilst still suffering from the effects of a calf strain and 12 days after hand surgery, I still had the stitches in my hand. I finished 4<sup>th</sup> in my Age Group, but didn't finish within the required 115% of the quickest in my Age Group (by some margin) and hence did not qualify. I then needed to enter the Dambuster and try again, still with the fear of a repeat of the calf strain bothering me. This time I was 4<sup>th</sup> again but had 105% and qualified via the rolldown, Cozumel here we come.

Some research of the event told us that it was a 1500metre non wetsuit sea swim (28.5 deg on the day), a pan flat 40km bike and a hot full sun 10km run (28 deg on the day) and humid. It was clear from feedback of the Sprint event on the Thursday, that there were some interesting sea currents around Cozumel, hardly any tidal flow (6inch rise and fall at the most) but an almost constant current 90% of the time in the same direction, North. On the day of the event (Sunday) the race officials reduced the 1500 metres to 1250metres because of the unusually strong current flowing in the 10% direction, South. I am explaining all this because it clearly changed the whole event especially for the less able swimmers. Watching the first few waves go off you could see the bunching effect of athletes trying to draft other swimmers when going against the current. Anyway I was off 5 mins before Anne and sat behind an Australian and then an American on the upstream leg which gave me a 30:18 swim time. (Several in the wave took over the hour !). I enjoyed the fast bike (1:19:21) then tackled the hot hot hot run, which was 2 times 5Km with lots of water/ice/energy drink stops. Knowing that several people suffered badly in the Sprint event, it was clear that it was going to be absolutely essential to drink lots to stay hydrated on the run. The Brownlees had shown the way in Rio, drinking and pouring water / ice over themselves at every opportunity. The event support staff were brilliant, pouring ice down your tri suit and thrusting water sachets at you all the time but there were lots people collapsing and in difficulty. Anne found the swim especially difficult, she normally does about 38mins for 1500metres but posted a 1 hour 3 mins swim time which left her short of energy for the bike/run, however she still finished 11<sup>th</sup> out of 20 ladies in her age group. Two USA and one Canadian did not finish the swim, they were told to get in the rescue boat and take to shore, race numbers noted and allowed to continue but their result did not count, one Canadian lady DNF. I was 15<sup>th</sup> out of 26 in my age group, again 3 competitors were ordered into the rescue boat and one DNF. However, I was 4<sup>th</sup> GB out of 7, so I consider that a 'result' for me, as my running is quite weak and the fact that I gained the place via the rolldown.

To summarize, a wholly enjoyable experience made easy by using the Nirvana Europe travel agents and wonderful to feel part of the GB team especially when the Brownlee 'incident' hit the headlines. Feedback about the 'Draft Legal' Sprint event was all positive, with many triathletes 'buzzing' about that particular experience.