

## Club Croc Testimonial

### **Daniel Pollard**

Fear and fascination. That's what triathlon used to conjure up before I first dived into the sport. I wanted to give tri a go, but wasn't sure I had all the skills needed to complete one. I was a competent runner and I was confident I could handle myself on a bike. But I was an appalling swimmer.

I had competed in the teams section of the Noosa Triathlon twice doing the run leg. As I suffered both times in the furnace that is November in Noosa I remember seeing the guys competing as individuals. They looked so composed, despite having to run in the blistering heat after having already knocked out a swim and bike leg. At the end of my second Noosa Tri I decided the next year I just had to have a crack at the whole thing.

Unfortunately this meant I was going to have to swim. I went to my local pool and prayed to the swimming gods to give me a good first session. But there are no swimming gods. I know this because if there were they would surely have struck me down for the gross sins I committed against form and style that day. Through lots of practice (punctuated by strategic use of breaststroke) I got better. That's the good thing about being dreadful. You can't help but improve.

My first race was in February 2008 at the Caloundra Tri. Battling a strong tide and my own technical deficiencies, the swim was every bit the struggle I expected it to be. At one point I sighted a tree on the shoreline. It didn't move for about 20 or 30 strokes, which meant neither had I.

Finally I got to the shore and stumbled, struggling to breathe, into T1. After a brief panic trying to get my singlet on it I reminded myself that I was unlikely to be challenging for a podium that day, calmed down and took a few deep breaths.

The bike was a happy change, although the horror of the swim managed to follow me for a couple more kilometres in the form of a vague taste of boat fuel in my mouth. But what I was really looking forward to was the run – my strongest leg.

I leapt off my bike and burst out of T2! I was running with poise, grace and determination. All of which lasted a good 50 metres at which point every muscle in my legs seized and I slowed to what can only be described as a death shuffle. Four rather painful kilometres later I finished. I was sore, exhausted and had blisters all over my feet. It was awesome. The tri bug had bitten me hard.

I started reading more about the sport and it was around this time that I first came across the Club Croc and Brad Beven's Squad. The opportunity to train with a legend of the sport Brad Beven sounded amazing, but I was worried my abilities weren't up to scratch. I soldiered on by myself.

After a couple of months I realised I could only improve so much going it alone. In September 2008 I phoned Brad and told him I was keen to train with the Crocs, but I was worried I wasn't good enough. Brad convinced me the squad was suited to all levels of ability and urged me to give it a go. I came along and was immediately impressed by the quality of the sessions, the many insights from Brad and friendliness of the squad. All three disciplines made rapid improvements, especially my swimming, and I was quietly confident I was ready for Noosa.

Finally the big day came. I was nervous, but excited. I felt if I could finish the swim in reasonable shape I would be okay. After an interminable wait treading water the hooter sounded and we were off. I hit a decent rhythm and, a few sighting problems aside, felt like I was having an okay swim. After what seemed an eternity I felt something wonderful – sand at the end of my fingertips. I had finished the swim in just on 30 minutes. It was going to be a good day.

The bike, complete with a slow climb and terrifyingly fast decent of “The Hill”, went off without a hitch and I felt good heading out on the run. I knew the course, but I hadn’t ever cycled and swum before running it in the past. Happily the kilometres ticked by steadily and, despite a few flat spots, I felt pretty strong heading into the last stretch.

Running down the finish chute at the Noosa Triathlon – treading the same ground as legends like Craig Walton, Emma Snowsill and Brad Beven – was as good as anything I have experienced in sport. I crossed the line of my first Noosa Tri in a little over 2.30. It was just outside my goal time, but you don’t quibble over seconds after something like that. You just start planning for the next race.