

Club Croc Testimonial

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The big four-zero, only a decade less than a half century, half way to 80! As I ponder this testimonial my life is apparently about to begin, or so I'm told - in about two and half days to be exact.

Yes, re-birth is apparently imminent and let it be known I've already put in a special request to "my maker" that there be a few physiological amendments prior to commencing life's next chapter. Gone will be the miniscule 60mmol VO2 max and the fast revving "engine" I currently own. Also, out will go the slightly lard-laden chassis and rubber struts I know as legs. Yep, I'm thinking along the lines a "Brad Beven-esk" 80mmol VO2 retro fit - you know, something built to provide the discerning ageing gent with the comfort and style he feels he deserves after years of toil with - let's face it - an inferior model with significant design flaws.

It's time to step out of the 4 cylinder putt-putt rice burner (yes, I do mean rice burner - I should live in a paddy and pull a rickshaw I eat that much of it) and into a high performance, yet sweet purring V8 roadster. Humming along at 3 minute k's, barely breaking a sweat...surely it's the least I deserve after 16 years of athletic endeavour in the sport we affectionately know as "triathlon".

It really doesn't seem long ago that I bumped into an old school mate that proudly professed that he was now a "triathlete". "Oh a tri-ath-a-lete?" I said quickly sounding it out in my head and nodding knowingly. Unfortunately I came up empty and my vague response was probably not what he'd anticipated - "Wow mate, that's great - so what are you "trying" out for?" From there I received "The Idiot's Guide to Triathlon" fully explained and punctuated with his real life race experiences from the previous three years.

Nonetheless, I was strangely intrigued by this strange sporting pursuit where men shave their legs, voluntarily present themselves publicly in poncy fluoro coloured lycra training kit and constantly chew on bars that I swear resembled repackaged "calling cards" scooped from the footpath following a visit from man's best friend. Soon, I found myself cheering on my buddy from the roadside at The Bribie Island Triathlon (circa 1993) and thinking to myself "reckon I might have a dig at this".

Following the purchase of my new fluorescent pink and yellow Repco Tri-Series I entered my first triathlon - The 1994 MSM Corporate Triathlon to be held at the new Bond University on the Gold Coast in May (yes, May - what the?) Race format was a daunting 300/9/4 and suffer I did. How could my comprehensive preparation have let me down so badly? I'd done the work - over-distance training in the pool (500m twice a week), cycled around a circuit taking me two blocks from home (10km) once each week, and running 4 laps around the Sunnybank Rugby Union fields (approx 3km) twice a week. I expected to be primed for competition, possibly even win the event! Back to the drawing board. (Note: Our team did win our category from a strong field...of one).

I bought a few USA "Triathlete" magazines and quickly came to realise that there was a little more to triathlon than just swimming, biking and running. After a few years of "self-paced" training and results directly correlating to my workload (mediocre at best) I joined a local tri squad for some motivation. The camaraderie of our club was outstanding and encompassed a great training and social regime. Yes siree, we trained together regularly, ate burgers and pizzas together regularly, and grogged it up at the local pub together regularly.

Consistency and commitment was our motto we lived by and we were dedicated to the cause! Oddly, very oddly actually, it was at one of our post-training "recovery sessions" at the Balmoral Hotel that the irrational notion of completing an Ironman first surfaced from the few undamaged brain cells that still existed between us. The 1999 NZ Ironman was a full 9 weeks away – plenty of time we reckoned.

So the preparation began. I vividly recall our training including weekly rides to the Ettamogah Pub and back. Whether it was the horrendous sunburn we suffered from wearing race singlets (ie. midriff length) and "boy leg" tri shorts (basically red and blue hot pants) or the venomous abuse we endured riding straight up the highway that I recall the most clearly I'm just not sure. Whatever, we serious about our training – damn serious. So committed were we that we turned at the Ettamogah Pub without even so much as thought of stopping for a quiet coldie to aid the long journey home - unimaginable only weeks earlier and quite something of a nutritional adjustment.

Crossing the line at NZ in 11:51:49 in the wind and cold that year gave me a new perspective on what suffering and perseverance can do for one's soul. Asking yourself so many questions and coming up each time with an answer your body doesn't want to hear has a profound impact on your psyche. Digging deeper and deeper into a dwindling supply of resilience and finally achieving your goal provides a sense of almost invincibility (something not to be confused with a similar yet far more detrimental effect resulting from consumption of alcohol).

In all I've now completed 7 Ironman events including 3 x NZ, 3 X Oz and in 2007 The Big Dance in Kona. By far, the most dramatic improvements came following some "encouragement" from my wife. Sarah is a highly motivated individual, super smart, super gorgeous, super committed, super...well you get the picture – she's pretty good. I'd casually mentioned that Brad Beven had started a Brisbane based tri squad and that I thought that these would be the guys to train with to achieve good results.

Sarah had done me the biggest favour in terms of my training. I'd pretty much resigned myself to the fact that mediocrity was my destiny and that I would never really be able to push the boundaries particularly over the ultra distance. Whilst I can't profess to be a world beater I can guarantee with absolute certainty that I would not have a sub-10 hour Ironman let alone a Hawaii Ironman finish on my list of achievements had Sarah not taken the step to introduce me to The Club Croc and Brad Beven's Squad. The club and squad members are a great bunch (in no way elitist despite the presence of some really great athletes) and the results speak for themselves. Having the most dominant triathlete the world has ever seen as your coach is a huge privilege as Brad is also one of the nicest blokes you could meet. I would recommend his squad to anyone of any level.

Having been in hiatus since my epic NZ adventure earlier in the year I look forward to returning to the fold very soon – but beware - if my prayers have been answered this 40 year old will be sporting the best engine can't buy. If only...