

One thing I will say about the Bracebridge triathlon- it is CHILL and that relaxed cottage feel is felt throughout the morning. All butterflies disappeared when I pulled into the race and I was met with a warm welcome and smile from the parking attendant.



*Photo: Just chilling in transition with my pal Katrina before the Sprint race.*

The best and the worst about Bracebridge is the format. If you are new to triathlon or tend to get overwhelmed in the water- this is a GREAT race for you. Every participant is sent off in 5s increments. This means you get to start your swim on your own- no racers knocking you over, kicking at you, hitting you and overall causing unnecessary stress. It's just you and a fast current that whips you down the river ☺. Now if you are a very competitive person and the best part about racing is chasing down the competition in your age group- well this race becomes a game of skill and math. It is hard to figure out where you are in your age group throughout the race. But- the silver lining is, this allows you to really look internally and dig deep to swim/ride/run your best.

My race was pretty interesting at Bracebridge; I started out 3<sup>rd</sup>. Which was great because I had the whole river almost to myself; but was difficult in the swim to keep pushing harder/faster and not just float along. The advice given at the beginning of the race was "its against current the entire way back, the current is better closer to the shore." In hindsight I should have listened to this a bit better. I was following a competitor through the water who was taking a hard line straight at the buoys and not the shoreline. Only in the last 200m did I move closer to the shoreline and it was then that I started to make some ground on her. My average swim is usually 1:37-1:42/100m and in Bracebridge my swim time was 2:00/100m. So there is the impact of the current!

Transition 1: coming out the water, there were a ton of folks cheering us on- it was a great feeling to be done the swim leg and it was a quick and easy move to get through the small grassy transition area and grab my bike.

Running out onto the bike course- the mount line is right before a bit of hill to get out of the park. Some advice: ensure when you rack your bike that the chain is in the small chain wheel and the rear cog is on a lighter gear. After a tough swim against the current and a quick transition- your legs are not ready for this little hill to start the bike!

The bike course is 42km and is a beautiful, scenic route. A portion of the route heads up the 118 North. For those unfamiliar with the 118, it's a bit of a highway and it is not closed off for the race. This means you will have cars passing you for a good portion of the race. The traffic isn't too heavy at this time in the morning, so it's not as stressful as it sounds- but is something you need to be aware of. As you are coming up on a racer- just make sure you look back and there isn't a car coming at you in the moment. Just be safe. Otherwise the course has every kind of hill/mountain you can think of. There are some short sharp hills, some longer climbs and a few false flats that really catch you out of nowhere. BUT- what goes up must come down and the descents are worth it! SO much fun 😊.

Having come off two weeks of intense training, my legs and my mind were feeling a bit flat. This made it hard to really push the watts through a time trial format. But with the technical hill climbs, I still managed to push 190W with an average speed around 34km/hr. I was pretty happy with it as hills are not my forte.

Coming back into the park, I raced into the transition as the first female in. I was the first female to start, so really I was just maintaining my position...but always fun to wave the flag for all the ladies coming after me 😊

The run was as challenging as the bike course. My hips were tight and legs were having after the bike. I could only hope it dissipated quickly! The route heads out onto a nice country road that has minimal traffic. But first you need to run along a busy street and down 2 hills. Those 2 hills really get you as you climb back up with only 350m left in the race. Although the days started out cloudy- the sun was beaming down on us for the 10km. Luckily the quiet country road was shaded; hilly- but shaded. My legs were pretty shattered at this point- so I was trying to hold a 4:15 pace instead of the usual 4:10 pace. There was a pretty big gap between myself and the guys in front as well as the guys/ladies behind me. So with tired legs, a cramp in my ribs and no one to chase, it was truly the hurt locker. Lucky for me- the volunteers on the run course were AMAZING and cheering for me. I looked forward to every station for that little boost of motivation and happiness.

My friend Katrina was waiting at the top of the last hill – camera ready and cheering loudly to get me through that final stretch. In hindsight- I can't image how a photo of me climbing what felt like a mountain at that time could have turned out well- here is what the hurt locker looks like- with a small smile 😊



*Photo: last 350m up a hill that felt like a mountain.*

Coming into the finish- I was still the first female to cross in a time of 2:25, but was later unseated by some amazing fast ladies who managed incredible bike splits. 3<sup>rd</sup> out into the water and took 3<sup>rd</sup> female. Apparently I had something going with the number 3 that day ☺. All in all- it was an amazing race and experience.



*Photo: Congrats to all the speedy men and women capturing the podium at Bracebridge!*

I arrived on the Saturday to cheer my friends racing the sprint and as an ambassador took the opportunity to volunteer as well. If you ever the ability to volunteer with Multisport Canada- I highly recommend it. It's an amazing experience- meeting folks in the community who are helping out and looking to get involved. I worked the aid station for the run on Saturday and the folks with me had never done triathlon before and had no idea how it all worked- but boy could they cheer loudly! It was so amazing to see such enthusiasm for the sport. I was also impressed with the gratitude the racers showed. Everyone smiled at us, thanked us if they could and tried to leave their cups close to the garbage can. It was really incredible to see.

So I encourage you- if you haven't volunteered before- it's amazing= definitely do it! And if you can't volunteer- make sure you thank the volunteers as you race by. It really means a lot to those volunteers- it's pretty hard work keeping ya'll hydrated!

Until next time...  
Kelley