

Australian Ironman Report

The Australian Ironman Championships were recently held in Port Macquarie once again over the grueling distances of 3.8km swim, 180km bike leg and a 42km marathon run with over 1500 competitors taking anywhere from just over 8 hours 30 to 17 hours to complete the challenge.

Race morning saw heavy rain clearing for the mass swim start, however, more showers and a strong southerly wind persisted throughout the bike leg before clearing for good conditions during the run.

Triathletes competing from the Illawarra Triathlon Club did themselves and their strong contingent of enthusiastic supporters proud in completing the race, where it is said, that an Ironman is not made on the clock but on the finishline.

Although having a wealth of elite triathlon experience, Mark Clough completed his first Australian Ironman in 10.04 hours after having one of the most competitive swim ride legs in the strong field. Patrick McNeill (12.40) was also pleased with his first time finish. Steve Newman had a solid race (10.17) following on from New Zealand Ironman just 4 weeks prior. Mark Scott (10.54) was satisfied with his result considering the limited preparation and training he had taken into this race. Mark's biggest triumph for the day was when two of his athletes, Carolyn Dews and Bob Scott, who he coaches achieved personal best times and excellent results on this course. Carolyn was very pleased with a time of 11.05 and third place in her age group just missing out on a highly sort after Hawaii world championship qualification. Equally pleased was Bob Scott (11.45) who competed in his 6th Ironman not only recorded his best time but improving his overall position in the field by almost 200 places. Bob could not hold out local veteran of 16 Australian Ironmans, Gareth Buckley who overtook him in the run to complete the course in an excellent time of 11.33.

The race was won by Patrick Vernay (8.31) from New Calidonia for the second year running and the female winner was Chrissie Wellington (9.04) from the UK. Chrissie won Hawaii in 2007 and has quickly risen to the top of the sport.

Many of the athletes will now attend Club Championships in Nelsons Bay in May prior to a rest and recovery over Winter months before preparing for next years challenge.

The final race of the Illawarra Triathlon Club will be held at Port Kembla (Seniors College) on Sunday 27th April 2008. Registration 7am – 7.30am, race start 8.00am. These club races are designed for people who want to try the sport and the short distances can vary depending on confidence and ability. Come and have a go. For more information visit www.itc.org.au.