

Challenge Roth 2013 – Andy Veall Race Report

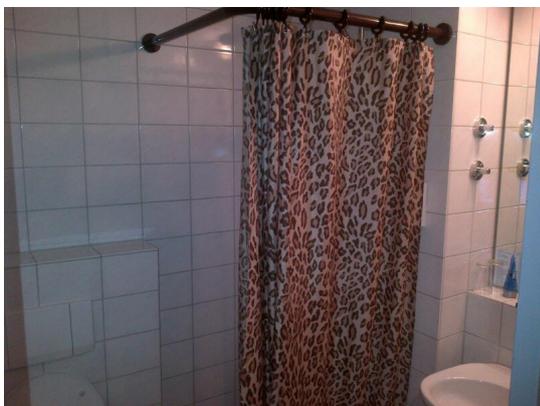
The journey to Roth is quite easy, just like France last year I decided to go by air as this worked well for that trip, so I flew direct into Munich and then drove up to Nuremberg, the flight got in early afternoon so I could actually stop off in Roth on Thursday and register for the race etc. here I bumped into Paulo, Annie and Tony and had a quick chat at the expo, then I carried on into Nuremberg as I wanted to get settled in hotel and build the bike etc. As I left, I bumped into Caroline Steffan who was waving frantically at me as she drove into the expo. I explained I was just leaving and walked off. I didn't want any distractions at this stage, I don't think she was happy about that but I was there to race, not socialize and give away my secrets. I guess she'd heard t2a were in town and that I knew Jason Metters.



World Champion Caroline Steffan arriving at the expo

I noticed when I was driving to Nuremberg reading German road signs and listening to German radio news in a manual shift car I felt like Jason Bourne on a mission. (just FYI)

I was staying at the Aria hotel, which was a cheap option and very basic but clean. Only real downside was it was next door to a nightclub so it was a bit noisy late at night which didn't help with sleep but overall it was ok and at 60 euro a night can't really complain. The hotel room had leopard skin shower curtains, which I thought was pretty unique and also abit scary. (see below)

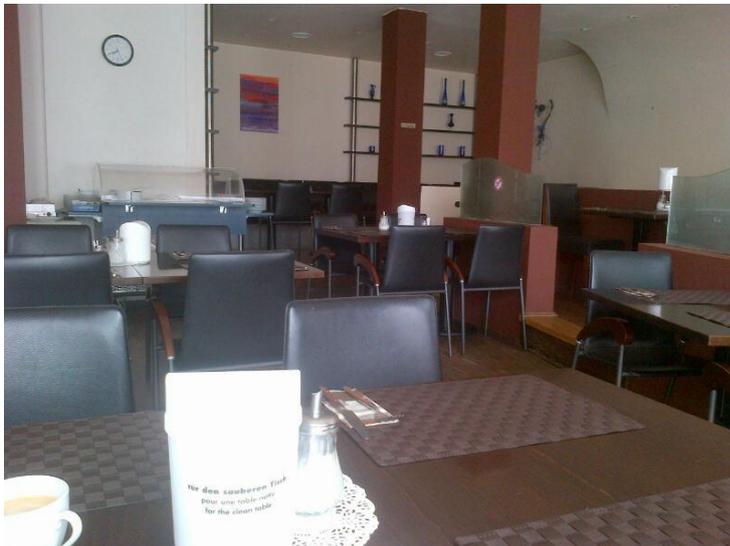


The days leading up to the race went really well, we did a swim practice and bike ride on Friday morning 10am in the Rothsee lake, which is right next to the swim start and it was stunning – probably the best swim I ever done except raaperswil which was better. Piers, Paulo, Annie and

Tony did a nice easy 30min swim, then piers and I took the bikes for a spin for 20mins. It was a bit embarrassing riding with piers and his rubbish P5 Cervelo bike, but no one noticed. Or at least they didn't say anything to us. Then back to hotel and watched the tour de france in german on TV. That was perfect as you can lie there on bed for hours and just switch off and rest and doze off for a bit etc.

Piers and Wendy were staying in the Sheraton, which was only about 1km from my hotel so we had dinner each evening together which was nice and relaxing. It was good for me having those guys around as I could ask stupid newbie questions and piers is always happy to share his experiences and tips etc after doing 8 IM races. Wendy's knowledge of Im racing was limited. I think I would have been more stressed without that, also piers is very good at planning the logistics around an ironman race – again that helped me a lot to chill out beforehand.

The day before we went for a 5k jog to loosen the legs, breakfast with all the other athletes in the hotel, bike check in, tour de france, pizza – perfect day before a race I reckon. I also drank about 4l of water throughout the day and a litre of sports drink I brought with me.



Breakfast with the other athletes in the hotel – I was the only guest I think.

At the bike check in we saw a lot of the pros. I got my corporate sponsorship stuff done which can be tiring – just ask Jimmy about this. Quick chat with Caroline Steffan, I gave her some tips on swimming technique which she seemed to appreciate. I had to cut her off mid question and explain again about the fact I was focused and didn't really have time to stop and chatt and walked off as she was very talkative and keen to get more tips, so she said thanks and went back to her bike. She looked a bit disappointed though.

Race day

The day didn't start off too well for me as I got up at 3am and had some breakfast in the room, then left the hotel at about 3:45 to give myself plenty of time – this was a good call as the barrier in the car park was "MACHINEN KAPUT" so my car was stuck in the car park. I did actually think about driving thru the barrier, A-Team style, then thought of a plan B and called ever dependable Piers. Luckily he hadn't set off yet, so I legged it his hotel and got a lift to the start. As it turned out the

traffic was fine and we were there far too early. Arrived at 4:50. Not starting till 7:50. Again Steffan was hanging around looking for more advice – I just tried not to make eye contact as I knew she'd be over again asking about the team and stuff.

I hung out with Mike, Paulo, Henry and Ian for a good while away from transition, bit cold but soon warmed up as the sun came up. Then before I knew it I was in my wet suit in the holding pen ready to get in the water and very nervous about the day ahead to be honest as I wasn't sure what to expect.

Swim – this went well for me - it was the best swim I ever had in a race as I think it was the first time I was actually relaxed in the water, even at the beginning it was a little bit rough but for once it didn't phase me at all. For sure it was the JBRs, Crowie camp sprints and a few Hamdan sessions were the big difference since France last year. Also I had done some extra sessions with coach which really helped a lot as I now have 2 speeds – slow and very slow! But this means I could look for some feet then speed up and get there and I found a guy who was swimming ever so slightly better than me and got in behind him for the entire length of the course after the first U turn. Also he had some weird tape on this foot so I could identify him easily. I did try and go past him a couple of times and failed but that confirmed I was better off staying behind him. I think I conserved a lot of energy doing this but didn't gain much speed, but coach had repeatedly said to me "be patient" and so I stayed where I was. Usually the swim is my worst part by a mile, but I actually enjoyed it the most I think – Suz Newton you were right! Swim time 1:24. 4 minutes slower than I hoped but saved lots of calories.

T1 was weird as I was very dizzy getting out of the water after 1:24 of continuous swimming. Then into the tent and struggled with the wetsuit although the German girl helped me. She pulled out the gear from my bag and all the nutrition from the cycle jersey fell on the floor, then I generally fuffed around, exchanged numbers with the helper and I was off. I had a fairly long run to the bike which was in a separate field to the main area, helmet and glasses on and off. So all up it was a slow T1. As for Trons email about hating transition, I disagree, it's the one place you're allowed to sit down – I loved it in those tents!

Bike – the first 30km of the bike was brilliant for me, my average speed was about 31km/hr, the roads were fantastic, more hills than I expected and a slight headwind but felt great. I was eating every 30mins – I had 'roo bars' – replacement product at AHQ for pro bars and then just those nut bars you get in petrol stations – each one is 180cal, so I was eating around 360cal per hour, all natural food which tastes good but harder to chew I suppose. I only carried 2 bottles, one with Isostar sport drink and one to swap at every 30k aid station. I was happy till about 100km, then the wheels came off (not literally) and I started feeling very weak. I checked my average heart rate and it was 140. I should have been at 120bpm which for me is 70%. Then I made best decision of the day.. I forgot about time on the bike (I was hoping to go under 6 hours) and just focused on getting the average heart rate down to 120, so I really backed it off. Steffan came flying past waving and shouting at me wanting to chat again, but I ignored her.

People were coming past me now including some nutter in a totally bright green suit and matching bike (we had been cat and mouse the whole time) and I could see my average speed dropping but I tried to ignore this and just focus on heart rate. I think I got excited on the first lap and paid for it a bit on lap 2. I was pretty wrecked getting off the bike and honestly didn't know how I was gonna

run a marathon. Mentally I was struggling here, being passed so much but these were all the relay guys who didn't have to run after as I was in the last wave of individuals.

T2 – main problem in T2 was getting my orthotic innersoles out of the bike shoes into my runners. I had actually practiced this but didn't factor in a 3.8k swim and 180k bike effect on coordination so was struggling. I had to use a tyre lever I had in back pocket to lever the damn things out! Then I had to make a call of nature and then the run...#scary music#

Run – I started running with a lot of fear of the unknown and also relief I had 2 down 1 to go. I started running and realized I was OK and that I could do this. Piers had said 2 things that really stuck in my head: 1. The race doesn't start till 20k into the run so get to that point in the best shape possible. 2. "start at the beginning, keep going to the end and then stop" which is a quote from Alice in Wonderland which I thought was very accurate description of what you need to do! 3. I ignored Zoe's Road ID saying which says "if you can't do it, dream it" which is from Walt Disney I think. So I ran the first 20k in 2 hours and got to 21k and felt relatively OK (and passed the guy in green which I really enjoyed, plus another guy who stuck in my mind as he was wearing a white tri suit and he had, let's say...'an accident' – not a pretty sight).

The next big boost for me was seeing Annie and Paulo in a forest taking pictures of each other. This was great at 28/29k I had a chat with Annie and she was jogging with me and describing how close the finish was, this definitely gave me a lift. At this stage I was running solidly between the aid stations, then a little walk thru taking coke and water only, then jog on. I also had eletewater small bottle with me. I got cramp a few times in my arms(?) what's that about? And quads, but it seemed to come and go fairly fast so didn't really slow me down, so I guess the elete water worked.

So then I just kept going till I got to the end as per Alice in Wonderland quote from Piers. Job done! Kind of collapsed after the finish line and then had to talk my way out of being carried off on a stretcher, which I thought would have been overly dramatic. But the argument was less convincing laying flat on my back unable to stand up.

Thanks to Jason for the support and encouragement throughout the preparation and training and the main thing is I really enjoyed it, this is due to the great team we have at the moment and some good banter and some inspiring race reports / stories – add all that into the really hard training and it all makes sense.

Also thanks to 'team Jay Z' – without realizing it they talked me back into doing the race about a month ago after I had decided not to do it due to work deadlines and travel. And thanks and congratulations to all the guys in Roth over the weekend, specially Piers for the support all weekend. And Paulo – I know how much it meant to you – well done mate.

I haven't heard from Caroline since Roth.