

Iain survives Ben Nevis triathlon – and wins

Tortuous triathlon trilogy titan Iain Veitch has set sights on the annual Edinburgh New Year's Day event as a follow-up to his success in adding the Roc Scotland Ben Nevis title to earlier wins featuring runs up Mount Snowdon (Wales) and Scafell Pike (England).

The 41-year-old, from Peebles, set a course record in 2018 as one of his two previous wins at the Capital Classic which is based on 8 x lengths of the Commonwealth Pool (400m), an 11 mile cycle (3 times round Arthur's Seat) and a 3.5 mile run around the same circuit.

As well as attracting elite athletes like Iain, who missed the 2023 instalment as his wife, Joanna, had just given birth to their third child, the Edinburgh Triathlon also offers a beginners race and even a children's duathlon.

And despite taking place in the depths of winter it is doubtful whether conditions could be anywhere near as bad as during the Ben Nevis event.

"Conditions were apocalyptic, biblical even and on the start-line it was almost comically bad as we started to make light of things, asking each other 'can this really be happening?'"

Gallows humour had kicked in.

“The swim element was even cancelled entirely as the temperature in Loch Leven dropped from 12 degrees the day before to 11.5 degrees within 12 hours.

“In addition the Ben Nevis Mountain Rescue team who did a fantastic job along with the organisers, The Sensation Group, decided it was too dangerous to go all the way to the summit so we were turned back about two thirds of the way.”

And that's not all...

“On the cycle race we were due to cross maybe one small stream; it turned out to be 15 mini rivers!

“It was when I faced this cycling challenge that conditions were at their worst and I really thought I'd have to pull out.

“I was hypothermic and could not speak properly as my jaw was locked.

“I actually vomited due to the cold but decided to give myself a couple of kilometres of the subsequent run and somehow I felt better.

“I did, however, feel for one of my competitors, Lewis Williams, who drove for nine hours to take part, arrived at lam on the morning of the race then had a couple of punctures, the second proving too cold for him to repair when he was runner-up at that stage.

“Any problems I encountered were self-inflicted to an extent as I didn't put on enough clothes due to thinking the lighter the load on my back the faster I'd go.”

Ultimately Iain's time of 4 hours, 14 minutes and 58 seconds was more than 25 minutes ahead of the runner-up and the agonies of what many will feel is a masochistic experience were quickly forgotten given a warm shower.

“Afterwards the feeling of completing the race was quite

exhilarating” admitted Iain.

And it certainly hasn't put Iain off trying to add to laurels at the extreme end of triathlon.

“There's one called the Celtman Extreme Scottish Triathlon next June in Western Ross which I rather fancy having a go at.”

Extreme? Based at the foot of the Torridon Mountains the schedule involves a 3.4km swim in jellyfish infested Loch Shieldaig followed by a 200k bike ride involving 2200 metres of climb and concluding with a 42 k run over two munro's!

“Definitely something to think about” says Iain, adding “but for now I want to spend time with my wonderful wife without whose support and encouragement I'd have had no successes whatever as well as my youngsters aged 9 months, six years and nine years.”

If any athlete is entitled to bask for a spell in some sporting glory for a spell it is surely Iain after demonstrating how to overcome triathlon torture.

Oh, and the winnings?

Iain won entry to next year's event, £200, clothes and a trophy from ROC Scotland while the trilogy win brought beer, wine and “other bits”.

As Iain says: “Quite a random mix”.

ALL IMAGES : OUTWEST IMAGES







