

Austria Extreme Triathlon 2022

I have been racing in Australia and the U.S., and despite the abundance of jaw-dropping landscapes nothing has captured my imagination more than coming home and racing from my hometown of Graz up to the majestic Dachstein. Sometimes you take the beauty of your own backyard for granted, but after having been living abroad for so many years this race for me was also about rediscovering Styria. The organizers mapped out a magnificent course, starting with the Mur (I never thought one can swim in there), over Gaberl and Soelkpass to the Dachstein Suedwand. I loved every bit of it.

So how did the race play out for me? Since I have been living (and still live) in flat parts of the world, my advantage certainly doesn't lie in hill-climbing or hill-running; which did make me nervous in the leadup to the race. I still chose to ride my Canyon-TT given its superiority on flatter terrain, with 54/42 chainrings and a 30-11 cassette (yes, the Soelkpass did get hard in the end!). Luckily, things went well, which I attribute primarily to the following reasons:

- (1) Firstly, a brilliant support crew: my friend Stefan and my dad. Stefan knew the run inside out and told me where to push and where to take it easy. Most importantly, he accompanied me for 25km with food and drinks. My dad drove, mapped out the stops along the route, handed me many sandwiches, and was the live-communicator to my family, friends and other followers around the world. It was brilliant to share with him such a special Ironman experience. Also, Joe Hirtenfellner's (the course record holder) race brief about the do's and don'ts was on point: eat normal for as long as you can. Don't get caught up racing others (too early). Most importantly, enjoy!
- (2) Secondly, the excellent organization: Maria, Hugo and their team mapped out an amazing course. Communication around the race was swift and clear; they were out cheering for us on the run when much needed.
- (3) Thirdly, consistent training: I have been spared of injuries and was able to put in regular hours over the last couple of years.

Thank you again for organization this amazing event and I hope I see you again on the start line.

#136 Mario Schabus