

## Dennis Ruts, BEL #94

### Race report Team 94 Kim, Mathias and Dennis

What an adventure! Where should I start to give you an idea what this race meant for us? Maybe at the beginning. Team 94. 3 members. My wife Kim, Mathias and me. Without them no race. They're as crazy people from 2 o'clock till the end of the race to be sure I would have everything I needed. Forever grateful guys.

Thursday before the start of the race there was a swim at hering to get a first impression of the Mur (that's the river you will be swimming in). The atmosphere was really relaxed. Athletes shaking hands, introducing themselves. We got tips and tricks from Claudia Muller. Apparently a topswimmer because she swam 72km in 24 hours and she had tested the Mur when the water was only 0,9°. Crazy, loco loco. ;) the group was divided in two. The athletes without river experience joined Claudia. I choose Claudia. Just to be safe.

about 25 swimmers tried and a lot of them failed. No making it, taking the buoy with them etc,.... I listened to my team and they guided me perfectly. I was kind of assured for the race. We went to the swimstart and the goal was to round the buoy and swim with the current to the 3rd buoy. You need to understand the technique to round a buoy against the current. Taking two sailors in my team was the best move in years!

After the race we heard that some athletes didn't show up at the start because they got scared of the swim. Come on guys, you knew this was extreme! Prepare yourselves! It's all in the head.

The Start.

At 2 o'clock I get up. As usual I haven't slept a bit but I doesn't worry me anymore. Lessons learned during the norseman 2015. My team knows exactly what to do. They prepare everything while I can concentrate on my breakfast. This goes so slow at 2 o'clock...

At 3 o'clock we drive to the start. It's was a weird sensation but I felt kind a relaxed. During a normal Triathlon I always have stress to forget something but here you have your team and the car. If you forget something they can still get it in the car. It's a comforting feeling to start such a heavy extreme day.

Even though I'm superrelaxed, Murphy is never far away. We put our gear away and suddenly a microphone under my nose. "Would you like to

give an interview?”. “Euh, yes why not.” After the interview it was time for the famous visit at the toilet. CLOSED!! Omg stressful. Let’s hit the bushes. It comes with the ‘EXTREME’ package. ;)

4 ‘o clock. Time to go to the swim start. Everything is ready. My gps tracker on the back, material checked. I am 100% ready. Kim briefed me completely on the technical part of the swim. I memorised all her drawing. I gave my team a big hug and off we went. I jumped in the water and started swimming against the current for about 100 m. Then it was time to change direction. 70° to ward the middle of the river! Remember this and you’ll be safe!

The current took my body and I rounded the buoy perfectly. BAAAM there we goooo. Whooohooo with the current. It’s a strong current. Top speed 35 sec/100m. After 22min I reach the last 2 buoys. And here it’s so important to ignore your triathlon instincts! Do not cross the river in a straight line. I repeat DO NOT. Can’t say I didn’t warn you. I round the right buoy and start swimming against the current with strong legs. (70° to the middle of the river)

Anyway it went smoothly. I rounded the buoy as if I had done a 100 times before. YESSSS. Let’s finish this swim. Oh boy this is heavy. I stay as close as possible to the shore. Not easy with the rocks and branches. I have to fight for a good position but after a while I’m alone and I find a rhythm that suits me well. I get out of the water after 1h05. I’m happy. Kim and Mathias wait for me. They get me dry and I start to put on my gear as quick as possible. Other support teams look at us with a weird expression on their face. Yeah guys I’m here to race. Sorry ;) I take my bike and run to the road. We’re off for a very, very long day. Before the race I was very worried about the bike leg. I used another preparation then the 4 years before. No training camp on mallorca, no trailrunning. Just Wahoo kick and flat roads. It was a wild guess but I believe in my powermeter. So let’s enjoy 186 km of beautiful sceneries and my Garmin. The first 47 km towards Gabrl were a good warm-up. After 1h25 I reach the first climb of the day. The Gabrl. Not super steep but pretty long. It takes a while before you reach the top. During the climb I caught some athletes. But just before the top of the climb I start panicking. It starts raining and I can’t find my support team. Where are they? If I have to make the descent in the cold rain I’ll probably lose a lot of body heat. I take the downhill pretty fast. During the descent I get reassured. No rain has passed here. Finally I find my team and my wife is very relieved that I survived the first downhill. Just like Claudia, Kim and Mathias told me. If you do it this way the current will bring you exactly at the buoy. It works perfectly until one of the kayakers starts blowing his whistle that

I'm swimming in the wrong direction. I yell: "It's ok, I'm using the current!"  
Maybe he needed some lessons of my wife

One climb down, 3 to go. Awesome ride! Nobody in front of me, nobody behind me. I was alone for at least 100 km. Love it. After the second climb my Garmin lets me down. Battery low. Oh boy. Why the hell did I take that old GPS? Luckily I can count on my team. I tell them to find my second GPS that I took by accident. I quickly change and continue my journey. Mathias yells something from the car. What did he say? 8th or 10th position. Naaah probably misunderstood. It has to be. 5 minutes he repeats the message. Two athletes in front of you. One on 1 minute and the second 2 minutes. I get a strange feeling inside. Me? Top 10?

I get a boost. I start the last climb. The fearful Sölkpass. Tom is surprised that I pass an athlete with mechanical problems. I feel bad for him. I quickly ask him if he is ok but I don't get an answer. I'm so focused that I fail to see it's Marc. One of the four Belgian athletes. Marc had a serious fall during the 3rd descent. Lots of respect that he continued the race.

I keep on pushing but it's getting more difficult by the minute. 9% is hard. I pass a house with a family on the balcony. I shout that it's so BRUTAL and the father yells: "it ought to be!".

My team notices that it's getting harder by the minutes and they decide to stay longer at my side. "You are on position 6!", they yell. And the hardest part is still in front of me. The last 4k (12%). My lungs are screaming for air, my legs burning, aching for me to stop. I can't sit no longer. Up again on my pedals. Going to the left side, back to the right side. And so on. But I'm not the only one dying. I slowly catch up with number 4 and 5. Every turn I take a couple of meters. Tears almost run down my cheeks. My team has pity on me. Or maybe not? My wife yells: "you wanted extreme? You got extreme!" and I have some difficulty to smile.

God damnit Dennis. Push! Push! I reach the top with Andreas who's in 4th position. I take a brief pause to put on my vest and I start thinking that this climb could ruin my run. I really pushed it. But hey everyone suffered here. I start biking down as a kamikaze. More than 80km/h. My wife gets a panic attack so I let them pass. So I'm sure they will be at T2 on time. In the descent I meet Andreas again. I pass him but not for long. He pushes one more last

time. I let him go to save my legs for the run. No more risks. A quick transition gets me in 4th position again. Not for long. There is Andreas again. 3 times is a beer. ;)

We have a small chat. He says that I'm a strong biker. I accept the compliment and I tell him that I can see he is a good runner. "Only in the beginning", he moans. There he goes! I keep my pace and enter the forest. I lose the way but I'm still clear in the head. I turn around and find my way back. Damn lost a small minute.

There he is! The famous wall that I saw in the movie. Must be 35%. I crawl to the top. When I'm at the top I gently raise my tempo and continue running. Sven (future winner) passes me and shouts some comforting words. The atmosphere between athletes is awesome. 2 km further on the road I pass a runner with stomach problems. He has to quit the race. What a pity when you are so close. After 11 km I finally arrive at the first post. There is my team again. A quick fill of my bottles and an update of the situation. Apparently Andreas had a long stop and is not far away. Before the next stop at 17 km I pass him. A stronger runner passed me so it's not clear to me in which position I'm in. I started the run with the thought that I would be passed by a bunch of fast runners. But for once I could be wrong. Now I just need to get to that 27 km point where my fellow runner Mathias was waiting. Those 10 km were so hard and long. Always uphill on unpaved roads in the forest but suddenly I see a runner in front of me. Slowly I catch up with him. After a handshake I pass him. We stay in each other's neighbourhood for a while. A faster runner passes us. I arrive at checkpoint 27 km. My wife and Mathias are waiting for me with a big smile on their face. Backpack, refill, big hug and off we go. 17 km left. Then the suffering started. I didn't feel like running anymore. I was so close but still so far away. Mathias really needed to motivate me to go for top 10 spot. I did my best but I simply wanted to walk. The runner from the forest passed me. Push, pull, pushing on my quads. Whatever I needed to keep on going. "Come on Dennis, we are top 8", shouted Mathias. Sometimes I just wanted him to shut up

But he managed to get me running again.

He pushes through and gets me to the finish line. I take the banner as if I won the race. So unbelievable happy and relieved. I fall in the arms of my team. What an awesome feeling to finish this adventure as a team. 15 seconds after us, Renato rushes in. We are very surprised to hear that he managed to get the 8th place. How insane??? Finish time 13h39. During Norseman I had the same problem. Too

easily satisfied. Till today I regret the fact that I didn't try to run on zombie hill. I did a nice attempt for a couple of kilometers. At the last checkpoint I saw my wife. I was so happy to see her. We had no time to waste. Competitors were chasing us. A crew member told us that it was still an hour. Longest hour of my life. Climbing in the grass, mud, goat S\*\*T. We tried to use the pieces of grass as efficient as possible. Suddenly out of the blue a Polish athlete passes us. Wow. His pace was still impressive. Impossible to follow. I was going slower with the minute. And suddenly that voice again. Come on Dennis. Go for it. top 10!. Constant looking over my shoulder I get to the Südwandhütte. 1.5 km to go in snow, on rocks and roots. I try to move as fast as possible. I'm gonna make it. unbelievable. Every 25 meters Mathias shouts to me that nobody is behind us. We are fine. Then suddenly at 400m away of the finish line I get another message. "RUN DENNIS RUN." Renato is rapidly closing the gap. We start running. 200m before the finish Mathias twists his ankle after warning me at least 100 times.

Many thanks to my support team. I hope you enjoyed it as much as I did.

Many congratulations to the other Belgian teams. Marc Matthys, Peter Rondas and Christophe Riez.

Thank you to the crew and all the volunteers to organize this awesome experience. I really hope you will continue this phenomenon. It really has its place in the extreme triathlon world.

Cheers

Team 94

Dennis, Mathias and Kim from Belgium.