

Nick Mansley, #110, GBR (2017)

Firstly, I want to say thanks to Maria and all the crew for putting on such a wonderfully organised and beautiful race with a huge number of little special touches that bring out its family run, friendly feel.

I came into the race feeling good about my fitness but worried about the heat which I have really struggled with in previous races. My race went pretty well. On the swim I got my tactics right and kept close to the shore both on the way to the first buoy and on the way back up the river and was pleased to come out of the water in just over 1hr 20mins. It had been a very lonely but enjoyable and pleasant swim back upstream – I hadn't seen anyone since the turn. It took me a while to really get going on the bike – I normally need a climb to really wake up the legs but I was loving the ride and drinking lots in preparation for what was to come. As we went through the first 3 climbs I seemed to make reasonable progress through the field. On the last climb my bike started to have some problems (I couldn't change gear – and I was worried the front mech might be about to come off as there was a huge clunk). The last climb was quite tough and I was really pleased I had got over it before the worst of the heat. The reward was a lovely descent and I was pleased to hear I was in the top 25 overall as I started the run. The run started on lovely shady trails but that wasn't to last and we were soon down on exposed roads on the valley floor in the baking heat. It was so hot I thought one could fry an egg on the road and my brother told me it was 35C (95F). I could feel my head starting to get dizzy despite regularly pouring cold water on it and I slowed to a steady walk. Not many people seemed to overtake me and one that did was on the ground a few hundred metres later being sick and suffering with cramp – that helped me decide walking was the best option until things cooled off! After a long walk – much of it chatting to a nice Norwegian bloke we eventually reached some shadier parts and drank some beef soup which helped a lot. The run route got more and more beautiful with a really spectacular last 4k - stunning views and snow fields to cross and I could hear the drummer and cow bells at the finish line which spurred me on. Finally crossed the finish line just over 16 hours after starting (and in 18th place). A really lovely beer afterwards and hugs all round. Everything I had hoped this crazy race would be – super friendly, super tough and stunning scenery.

Thanks again to Maria, Erich (who supported me brilliantly on the run) and all the wonderful crew who put on such a special race.