

OUTLAW 2015 – one chick and a relay - Heidi Elliott

‘Heidi Elliott – you are an Outlaw!’ – I’d been visualising this moment since before I entered back in September but never fully believed it would happen.

SWIM

Just after 5am I head down to transition with Robin – it is beautiful and the sun is just rising over the end of the lake. Final bike check completed, I see Lisa with a huge banner which Zoey has made – I don’t cry at this point. Robin hugs me - the tears come – he tells me to trust my training. 5.45am and people are heading into the water. As I head to Bay 3 I see James Hooley making his way into the speedy bay, we wish each other luck, a hug from my friend Mark and in I get. The countdown is shouted: 5 minutes, 2 minutes, 1 minute – I don’t hear any others until the horn goes off.

Starting in Bay 3 gives me a fairly clear swim and I take my time as I gradually head over towards the left hand side of the lake. The turn buoy takes forever to come – when I think I’ve seen it I then see people going past it. I want to cry so I do one head up breaststroke, double check and then see that they are just taking it wide for safety. Back on I go – I go for the battle round it and on the 100m to the next one. Homeward bound! Holme Pierrepont being a rowing lake means you can see the distance markers of how far left to go. 1 km to go and I’m catching people who’ve gone out too quick. The swim

finishes, I'm helped out of the water and my wetsuit is unzipped for me. At this point, I look up at the lake clock; I was expecting 1.20/1.25 as I've taken it steady and not been swimming too well this year. It wasn't even 7.20 – I've had a good swim: 1.17.51. Fish Hooley is well gone with a swim of 1.02.18.

T1

No idea what to put on as we know rain is expected but at the moment it's a pretty nice morning. Arm warmers go in but waterproof gilet goes in back pocket.

BIKE

This is the bit that always worries me. I've got to average 14mph to hit cut off – my plan is to ride at around 75% max HR unless I'm under 14.2 mph average speed then I'll just kill myself instead. The start of the course is predominantly downhill and I reach the first checkpoint averaging 16.6mph – I know this won't last but my HR is fine so I go with it. What I don't know at this point is that for some reason the tracker didn't 'get me' here so people are worried. I go through Scarrington and see friends there, next I see 'The Fish' at Car Colston. Loop one finished an off I go 'oop North' for loop 2. Up Oxton Bank I go – the only real hill on the course at 12%, through the feed station. I'm still managing to take food & drink from feed stations 'on the fly' which I've never managed before. Downhill into Southwell where I see another friend. Just before the next feed station, the rain comes. I stop here, take the chance for a toilet break and pop my gilet on whilst a lovely lady tops up my drinks and holds my bike. Loop completed and back to the south. The weather is grim! Outlaw bike route is always

windy due to the relatively flat profile but this is grim – I’ve got over 40 miles left at this point and glad that I’ve trained in similar conditions. Back to the south – I’ve worked out that because I’m ahead of schedule I should see Robin on the southern loop as he should be finishing as I’m starting it. I do and I cheer him along. I go past the Pirates and their amazing signs for the final time. More grim weather but at this point I’m starting to overtake people as I’m being powered by the fact that whilst I’m in rubbish weather at least I’m not like my friend Sid doing it on a BMX! Final feed station and I’m well ahead of even my dream schedule. 97 miles, click, click, click – I look down – front puncture. It’s OK I say, I’ve practised this (a lot). It’s so cold though that my fingers won’t work. Luckily, the Outlaw/One Step Beyond van spots me after just a few minutes. They make me get in the van to warm up and fix the puncture for me. I could (and would) have fixed my own puncture but this is what I love about Outlaw: they will help you out. I keep getting out the van to offer help and they keep shoving me back in. Puncture fixed and I’m back on my way. Finish the southern loop and back to HPP. I’ve finished in 7.30.52 which was my wildest dream time. Robin also had a puncture at about 110 miles and had nursed his bike in for the final section, finishing in 6.09.33.

T2

Cold and wet! It feels like it takes forever to get changed but eventually I’m off on the run.

Run

This is where I'm hoping that my slightly lower heart rate on the bike will pay off. Off I go into the rain. For the first half marathon I manage my Plan A which is walk the feed stations and run the rest. As I embark on the towpath I see Andy Lindley – he will finish in a new PB time of 3.27.49. I'm doing as I'm told and I enjoy myself – there's a few gradual downhill slopes including over a bridge – I decide to be an aeroplane on these sections – it's fun (sorry Waggy!). My animal print outfit combined with odd socks and a pink hat is getting lots of attention which is giving me extra power. I keep waiting for the wheels to drop off but they don't. Yes I get slower, yes I have to walk a bit more than just the feed stations but I'm still going and still feeling pretty strong (cold and wet but strong). Coke, zero and crisps are my friends along with immodium and painkillers. There's been loads of support out on the run which I was so humbled by in such ridiculous weather. From the club, Amy-Jo was willing me on to 'chick' Robin whilst Rich Holdsworth was there volunteering handing out the lap bands; John Potter kept popping up too. Friends were also along the embankment and towpath and round the lake. Derby Tri Club were out in force and provided me with lots of support. I also saw lots of my online 'Twinkle' friends both running and supporting and we helped each other along. One lap of the lake to go and I'm still feeling strong, as I start this lap a few tears fall (it's OK no-one can see as it's raining!). From getting off the bike I've known I was going to 'make it' but now it's less than an hour away. At the last but one feed station I thank them for their help – I comment on crisps being my friend and they give me a bag to take with me. The rain actually appears to stop (maybe I was hallucinating but it doesn't matter!). The final feed station people offer

me some of their sandwiches and pizza for the final mile. The volunteers have been awesome.

As I head towards the finish line I'm feeling so proud. I have a rough idea what my total time is but not fully. I look up and the clock shows 14.45.something (even now typing I've typed 15.45 as that's what I thought it would be). I'm ridiculously proud. I've been told to milk this moment – I punch the air, I 'high five' everyone I can, including a little spin, I get grief off the commentators for my outfit and then I grab the banner. 'Heidi Elliott you are an Outlaw!'