

Freycinet Lodge Challenge 2009 Race Report by Luke Haines

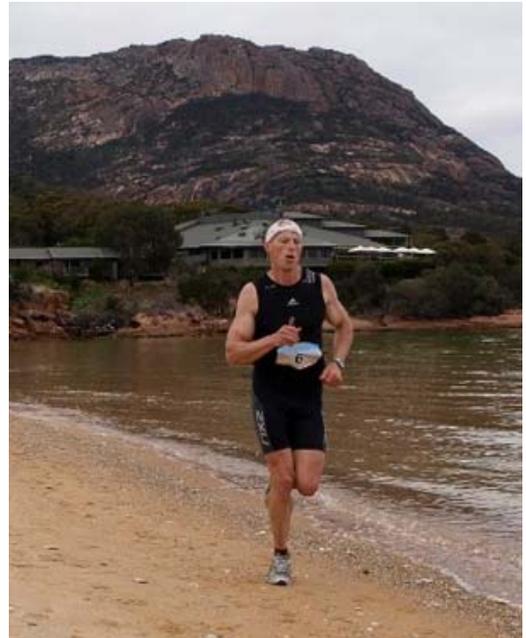
The new Australian Multisport Champion for 2009

The 2009 Freycinet lodge challenge was in its 10th year and has been the Australian multisport championships during this time. The pinnacle in Australian multisport racing, the 2 day event showcases the Freycinet National park in Tasmania. My preparation involved an intense 16week lead in, coupled with a weight loss program (“strict portion control”). Everything had gone to plan, despite an annoying hamstring niggle which Stuart Hinds was taking care of for me. The Upper Murray Challenge was a fantastic hit out the week prior, and while winning that event, the unknown was how the legs would recover after smashing them for 5hr 47min, which included a 25km mountain run.

An unusual y restful week by my standards was plan, coupled with compression and post race recovery meant the legs felt good the day before hand. The forecast was for a chilly 1°C morning but little wind. Thankfully, the forecast was wrong and temperature was a balmy 9°C. Looking around the pre-race briefing revealed allot of unfamiliar faces. Thankfully, they too didn't know me and maybe they wouldn't pay too much attention to me the next day.

The bike warm up felt good but the run not so good so it left a few doubts about how the legs would take to the opening 18.6km run around the Hazards and into Coles bay. At 8:00AM, we were off to a very quick start and an early group of 6 or so formed. I hung off the back and worked into my target HR zone before pushing forward before the rocky route around to Wineglass beach via safety beach. Two leaders opened up a gap and I took up 3rd position. The run felt harder than it should have but I was working in my AT zone after all.

By the closing stages of the run, I was in 4th place and about 5mins down. The road bike was a 60km out and back course on what would be described as a dead road. Fighting cramp on the bike already, my speed was good and by the end, I had made up a few minutes and 2 places. Coming into the 5min timeout, it was an unusual chance to transition and take on some extra



food. The paddle was 14km in a tidal estuary at Swanwick. The incoming tide provided a bit of current but this paddle felt very heavy due to the shallow water. It was great to be in my K1 against mostly ocean racers and multisport boats. I again made up some more time and had reduced the deficit to under 60sec.

Cramp had become much more of a problem and the first few km of the MTB were a real struggle. The recent very heavy rains had washed a lot of gravel off the tracks and left the creek crossings deep with many boggy sections. It did provide much more grip than usual however and to my surprise, I was soon within site of the leader. I saw a great opportunity to sneak past up a steep rocky hike a bike section and made my move. Thankfully, he didn't know who I was and I managed to skip away on the fast descents to follow. The MTB was rough with tree roots and rocks but I still pushed quite hard in an effort to open up a gap before day 2. So, I crossed the line in 1st and opened up a 3min lead over 2nd, Jonathon Hitchens and 10mins over 3rd Mark Padgent. Day 2 was shorter with a much shorter road bike and run. Despite losing 5min in the first run, I was quicker in the other 3 legs so will hopefully extend that advantage tomorrow before the final run. Recovery has gone well with a great massage, cold water walk and compression. I am as unsure about day 2 as day one, the only difference is that now everyone else will be unsure. A certainty is that my anonymity is now gone!

Day 2 begins with a 14km ocean kayak in Coles bay. The water was very calm with no wind but still very cold. A mass start of 170 kayakers made the start interesting but I was away ok. I kept an eye on Jonathon Hitchens just ahead of me as packs started to form. His pack slowly pulled a gap on ours and jumping across would require too much effort that could be better used later in the race. After the first paddle, I was around 4mins behind Jonathon. Third place was a few more minutes behind me.



The road bike was again a flattish time trial and I worked well to gain some time on the leader in this leg. No wind made for a fast ride time. Changing to the MTB was difficult due to the change in riding positions and my legs took a while to get going. This cost me as I only made up around 20sec. The course was essentially the reverse of the previous days loop. Off camber, slippery granite gravel descents made for an interesting leg. I had not caught Jonathon like the previous day so he must have pushed a bit harder than the previous day. Hitting water courses like the one below was fun but I was a little cautious as you never know how deep they will be. There was a 5min time out period to transition to the final run leg.

The days leader was waiting to head out as I was getting ready. No fluid, 1 gel and racing flats was my plan for this final 14km run. He started 2.5mins in front which meant we were equal on overall time. We both had in all in front of us and it made for an exciting finish for the waiting media. It was an out and back run to wineglass beach which meant we could gage each others progress at some point. I started slow, he started fast and he stretched the gap to 4mins (+1.5). Heading down the from the Hazards saddle, I measured a 2min gap so I pushed hard on the return climb, aided by others giving me time splits. As I reached the top for the last time, he was only 60sec in front (thanks Louise). A super fast and risky descent (off camber, loose gravel and rocks) meant I closed the gap to 20sec and he was in sight. With cramp threatening to holt my running, I backed off slightly and aimed for the overall win instead of line honours for day 2. As I approached the lodge I knew I had done enough and crossed the line very happy with my final run. The eventual time difference was 1min after 9hrs and 50mins of racing. Jonathon raced well to claim 2nd and Mark Padgent, Coles bay local, finished fast to comfortably take 3rd.



Wow, what an exciting 8days. To back up with competing in the Freycinet Lodge Challenge only 7days after winning the Upper Murray Challenge was always going to be tricky. To win both races was amazing and to be honest, more than I had expected. Tough racing with both races being won by about 1min. Good timing maybe? I knew I had worked very hard and the 16week lead in was worth every ounce of effort. I was also satisfied in realising another sporting dream.... **Australian Multisport Champion 2009.**

Now to look towards the World Championships. Thanks to City of Greater Geelong, Torq Australia, Beretta's BikeHub and Area51.net.au for their continued support. Thanks to Robyn at Precision Chiropractic for fixing a number of back issues and to Stuart Hinds for keeping my legs in the shape required to train and race at the output required. Also, to my number 1 supporter and support crew, Kerrilee, thank you! And lastly, Del, thanks for your valuable assistance during the race.

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