

IRC 2018 Race reports

The Under 20's festival including Junior and Youth elite racing returned to Mallory Park in the East Midlands for 2018. The IRC is a draft legal team event with podium spots awarded for the first 3 athletes in each race, points are scored for each individual place in boys and girls Tristar 2 and 3 categories, with the London team selected from our Regional series results (see below).

The team was well prepared and quietly confident following 4 training sessions in the 2 weeks leading up to the IRC weekend, where we tried to simulate race skills and course conditions as much as possible. The event took on a different format this year with the IRC racing on Saturday Mixed Relays on Sunday, so the team travelled up on Friday afternoon.

After a brief recce of the bike circuit the IRC event kicked off with the Tristar 3 girls, unlike last year it was a wetsuit swim which was a pretty rough affair! Katie, Maisie and Lucy exited the water a bit further down the pack than they would have hoped for, but all 3 recovered had strong bike legs on the technical and very windy course with Katie finishing in 18th place followed by Maisie in 25th and Lucy in 28th out of 39 athletes.

The T3 boys swim was similar to the girls race with plenty of rough stuff in the water, Christo exiting the water in a strong position allowing him to get into the 2nd bike pack a big advantage in the drafting format. Dan found himself with some work to do after the swim but had a superb bike leg and made his way back through the field, Spencer found himself at the back of the race following a bike mechanical but had a strong 2.5km run leg. Christo finished in 13th place with Dan in 24th both first year athletes and Spencer in 38th spot.

The Tristar 2 girls raced next with Ella, Lesedi and Isabel all coming out of the water very close together and exiting T2 in bike packs towards the back of the field, all 3 had very strong runs with Ella finishing in 19th place, Lesedi in 26th as a first year athlete and Isabel in 29th position.

The Tristar 2 boy's race was the strongest category from a London point of view with Theo and Freddie exiting the water in strong positions with Matthew just a bit further back in the pack, all 3 had strong bike legs with Theo finishing in an excellent 6th place, Freddie after a very strong run leg in 11th as a first year athlete and Matthew in a creditable 27th spot.

London finished overall in 10th place out of 13 regions with Scotland taking the title followed by Jersey and the North West, a completely different top 3 from 2017. So next year we could be up there too.

The mixed relays were on Sunday, a new format for triathlon with the short distances creating exciting racing opportunities, the format being T2 girl, T2 boy, T3 girl and T3 boy each racing 150m swim, 3km bike and 1.1km run before handing over to their respective team member. The mixed relays also allow IRC reserves to be involved in the racing gain experience from racing at a higher level. Josh, Lorna, Ethan and Lucy joined the other IRC team members to form 4 London teams with London eventually finishing in an overall 9th Place out of the 13 regions. The Mixed Relay title was taken by East Midlands followed by Scotland and Yorkshire.

All individual team results can be found on the BTF U20's web page. The standard of racing was high as per usual and Team London found the racing challenging, but competed really well in all categories and we improved our overall position from last year, well done to everyone in the team for their enthusiasm and hard work.

A big thank you to all the parents who were of great assistance during the weekend, Michelle a fantastic Team Manager creating a great team spirit and helping all athletes and parents leave with a positive experience. Also a big thank you to Bea for her coaching expertise in the training session.

Report by Jon Horsman (IRC Team Coach)

One icy lake, one winding motor racing circuit, sixteen nervous London triathletes and an exceptionally windy Sunday afternoon. After short team briefing at the hotel we congregated one by one at the Mallory Park venue. After weeks of gruelling training, platefuls of pasta and hours of waiting, setting up transition and putting stickers on equipment, the first wave of relay teams collected in transition with glazed eyes peering out from rubber scalps. This was the first time the relay had been held at the IRCs and we were all feeling rather honoured that we weren't currently bundled in the back of a stuffy SUV stuck on the M1, but this did nothing to relieve the huge rush of intrepidation cursing through our veins. Before long the Tristar 2 girls were immersed in the not over-welcoming waters, awaiting the rather pitiful squeak of the claxon. It was about this time, I discovered that we (the people racing as 2nd, 3rd and 4th leg) did not have to wait inside the race pen until just before we were needed. I was therefore left waddling around in my wetsuit for over an hour for no reason, receiving strange looks from other competitors

and their supporters whilst trying to mingle and warm up! Could I manage to successfully remove my wetsuit this time...

Ella and Lesedi emerged after impressive swims, practically flying through transition but then the flaws of over-crammed transitions came into play. Lesedi's bike had become entangled with a neighbouring bike and whilst a marshal rushed to the rescue, the other competitors (including Ella) raced off. Despite this major setback, Lesedi showed true London grit and fought back to overtake several other competitors in her leg before handing over the baton (in other words just tapping Freddie's hand). By then Ella had already passed over to Theo who was racing round the circuit confidentially demolishing competitors. Both TS2 boys put in cracking legs, before handing over to Maisie and Katie.

Luck evidently wasn't on the side of London B as the unthinkable happened again Maisie had the same crisis as her teammate Lesedi, unfortunately dropping back the team further places despite a storming run. Katie and Maisie raced brilliantly but all too soon it was down to the final leg me and Spencer. Excitement filled my veins as I made it through transition without getting stuck in my wetsuit (a major achievement). Battling an old South East rival I gave it everything to cross the line in thirteenth. Spencer, without any locked out brakes this time, raced across the line in 30th place (imagine the damage they could have inflicted without locked in bikes) London A and B had done well and although victory was not quite ours, we will return, stronger, faster and ready to attack the top tier next year. Having vanquished the paramount fear of letting down the team the euphoria of the team event exploded as whole armies of tristars acknowledged the great feat they had overcome together. The whole of London raced superbly as a team and there was no better race to conclude a brilliant weekend of racing.

Report by Dan Levine (London IRC Tri-Star3 competitor)

I was lucky enough to qualify for the IRCs in 2018, which stands for Inter-Regional Championships, and you compete for your region against other regions in the UK including Scotland, Wales and Jersey.

I never used to do triathlons, just running and a bit of swimming, but when I was 7 I watched my Mum do one and I really wanted to give it a try.

At 9, there was a local triathlon at a nearby school, so I went along with my mountain bike, swimsuit and trainers not really knowing what to expect and whether I could even finish it. Everyone was really kind to me, supportive and happy, and I ended up winning it - the mayor who presented the prizes told

me that the reason they run these local events were for children like me who had no idea what to expect but just wanted to give it a go, I think my smile told him everything he needed to know.

The next year I then did some more triathlons - I was really scared about swimming in a lake and I didn't really cycle but after each race, I gained a little more confidence and got a little bit more equipment when I proved I really wanted to continue. By the end of that summer (2017), I had got a trisuit and a tribelt, borrowed a wetsuit and for the last race was bought a road bike to see whether I could handle it. Going into 2018, I persuaded my parents to again enter me for the 2018 London series where I had just moved up into Tristars 2 (TS2) – I had everything I needed just wanted a little bit more practice competingand always remembering that I do this for fun wherever I placed.

By the end of the season, I ended up with 2nd place, I was so happy but there was still one event, outside of the London series events that I was required to do, Eton Dorney's Super series junior races. Not only was this a lake swim, it was also drafting on the bikes, fortunately ending in a flat fast run (which is my strength) – this petrified but also excited me. My mum tried to persuade me not to do, that I could wait until next year when I had actually swum in a lake but I wanted to challenge myself no matter how scary. The race finished, it wasn't my best race, was the most competitive triathlon I had ever been involved in but I positioned pretty well all things considered, it also made me realise how good I need to become.... And this set me up for a selection in to the London Tri Team for the IRC 2018 – not that this really meant anything to me at that time and I only knew one person in the entire team. I knew I would be one of the youngest and least experienced and I was very nervous.

What then happened over the next month after has now enabled me to realise how much I love this sport and how supportive, challenging, rewarding, hard and fantastic it can be.

The London team put on 4 long training sessions, organised by Michelle (one of the kindest people I have ever met) and Jon and Bea, who inspired and taught me so much. I also met the other athletes who were fun and determined, just like me. I learnt how to swim in a lake, draft, rip a wetsuit off whilst running, jump onto a moving bike, learn the important of cadence, working in a pack of cyclists, how to control a bike technically and race until the finish line knowing you have given everything plus we got team kits, which look amazing.

Then the race weekend arrived. I had no idea what to expect but Michelle had everything organised, hotel rooms, breakfast, dinner, photographer, team reece, bike mechanic and a great team atmosphere. I immediately made new friends with all my team mates, probably the most special part of the weekend.

It was really nerve racking, the other teams seemed so strong but ours looked like the happiest. Jon helped us with everything that weekend, strategy, warm up, reece and support. We all ended up racing well, hard and loving the whole experience. The first day was the individuals and the second day the team relays made up of 4 (2 boys and 2 girls, TS2 and TS3). It was tough, fast, competitive and didn't go completely plan (on the 2nd day for me) but i have now decided this is what I want to focus on. I'm not scared of swimming in a lake anymore or racing on my bike fast, I know I can run faster than anyone out there and I know what I need to build on and how my confidence has grown, but most importantly I had made fantastic friends and had one of the best weekends.

I can't wait for next year now, my aim is to qualify again and finish top 10 in the IRCs. My mum says if I really want it, I can achieve anything but that it's down to me.

A special thank you to Michelle, Jon and Bea for making this happen and changing the way I think about triathlons.

What did I learn:

1. You don't have to be exceptional at every discipline, as long as you can do all 3 pretty well, you can build on each one separately
2. It has to be fun and everyone is there to support you
3. Always try your best, if you can say you have done this then no one can be disappointed in you
4. Train hard and race fair, if you do this then truly the races are there for you to grab and win

Report by Lesedi Nkoane (London IRC Tri-Star2 competitor)

The IRCs were like something i've never before experienced. Since this was my first season doing triathlon, all the races I'd been to previously were not so serious, this was very different. I'd been warned by a friend that the swim was going to be brutal and that I should find space so not to get hurt. Did I take their advice? Nope!! I completely forgot and from the start line I dived straight in and got kicked in the face!

The training sessions at Shepperton Lake and Herne Hill Velodrome gave me a chance to get to know my team mates and get a taste of what it would be like in the race; they were all super competitive!! At the final Herne Hill training session we received our IRC Team Trisuits. I was so excited as it even had my name on the back!

When the IRC event finally came round, I was both nervous and really excited. I think our team did really well, and it was an absolute pleasure competing with all these brilliantly talented triathletes. Meeting so many new friends and their families was great, and if you ever get a chance to do something like this, don't hold back..... go for it!! I know that it can be hard work and scary, but you make so many new friends and this could be a "once in a lifetime" opportunity.

I can't wait to see all of the triathletes again in 2019!

Report by Isabel Wallace (London IRC Tri-Star2 competitor)

Useful Info:

- [British Triathlon IRC information booklet for parents, coaches and athletes](#)
- [Wheel Regulations for 2018 Season for DRAFT LEGAL races](#)