

Ian Williamson and the massage crew had set up their tent. The boat marshals started turning up, always a good sign as it means the tide is coming in. Huge thanks to our new boat marshals, Roger and Ash, as well as Simon, Kevin, Jim and the ever loyal Peter Beck.

The walking party set off slowly in the sunshine, past the lovely marshals on the wall. The boats were loaded with competitors and slowly Gun Hill became not just a place for nesting terns (thanks for not disturbing them) but for massing superheroes. A nice man from Natural England came to make sure we were all all right. Looking back to shore we could see the Lowland Rescue boats, visible against the groynes and slight sandbar shadow; the tide was still coming in but it was never going to be a big one. Roland Bewick's Fakenham Canoe Club and North Norfolk RNLi paddle boarders led by Liam were perfectly positioned on the beach when the call came through that the RNLi inshore lifeboat was in the channel. We were all ready to go, including Jim Whiteside and Lowland Rescue. Someone hadn't got a wetsuit. Stafford Proctor had a spare one. Someone hadn't bought goggles. Robert Gurney had some spare ones; photos were taken, bags stashed. The lifeguards formed a funnel and the count took place... 195! Someone hadn't made it to the start but it didn't matter. The competitors dived into the water at 11.15.

Ideal swimming conditions on top of the water but maybe not enough water below meant we had a lovely calm Chequers Inn swim leg with absolutely no panicking swimmers and a wonderfully controlled escort of safety craft. Despite the fact that a lot of competitors could be seen walking the straightest line, it showed that it paid to stay in the channel as, this year, Abbie Thorington set a new course record of 14:48. Sam Shoulders Kendrick, last year's paddleboarder leader, was on her tail but just could not catch her with 15:23. Second and third for the girls was Eve Dewsnap with 19:29 and Rachel Symington, our own swim coach, with 19:59. Second and third for the boys were Tom Vickery with 15:51 and Rob Lines with 15:54, pretty impressive.

Back in the field the marshals were working hard with James Holden and Stuart Cameron especially taking kayaks on the run from you all and stacking them all up in the trailers whilst simultaneously directing spectators and beaming happily. The marshals were numerous, cheerful, calm and strong throughout and that is what makes the Superhero such a unique event in the triathlon and endurance racing world. You don't get such great marshals everywhere, apparently.

The Barratt & Cooke bike leg started; the day was getting hot. A lot of water was being taken by the competitors from all the marshal points. We were ready for you, water was moved around the course by our excellent Norfolk & Suffolk 4x4 boys and on the back leg of the course chilled bottles of water were being delivered personally by HQ. Niall McCallum's watch apparently beeped every 15 minutes, whereupon he would feed his partner, Alan Hill, energy snacks or empty water bottles down him; this caused great hilarity of all surrounding them. Sadly, the bike was calamitous for some with Dylan Bogg and Roger Canham having an interteam collision with each other on a corner and poor Roger came away with a broken collar bone. Emma Littmoden came off at Sandringham and need 15 stitches (sorry, by the prizegiving we had exaggerated that up to 17) in her shoulder. Finally, Ant Ringer came a cropper on the cattle grid and also broke his collar bone. Ow Ow Ow... we hope you are all making a good recovery. David Horton Fawkes and Ben Hunter Watts proved that two surnames are better than one when they won the bike leg with a time of 2:05:45. Jamie Carter and Andy Nunn came second with a time of 2:06:02 and Robert Gurney and Tim Hansell came third with 2:06:20. Well done to you all. That is always a contentious leg, well fought over.

The paramedics were busy dealing with the bike falls so we were lucky to have amongst our marshal team several other medical professionals, including Di Black, Karen Snook and Tim Morton, all of whom voluntarily stepped up to the challenge of keeping you safe, being alert to your physical and mental state and stepping in when required. Thanks to them and to you for heeding their advice. We had also trained up 12 of our marshals as first aiders on a course run by Martyn Flitcroft back in May for which we are very grateful. Good job none of them were required when Clare Birch got shot at whilst on her bike past Sandringham by someone shooting pigeons. Literally a piece of shot hit her face! She says she is going to dine out on that story.

So to the Holkham run; it is often dispiriting for those runners to be leaving the field only to find the crowd have their backs to them as they have spotted the lead runners already coming back across the marsh, having completed the epic last leg. So, how marvellous to have the Gresham's Band powering through some very uplifting music which was floating out across the village. Water that had been left in transition

boxes for this final stage was by now at almost egg boiling temperatures so it was wonderful to have jugs of cold water and more bottles available at bottom gate as dehydration would have been a bad move at this stage. Big disappointment was felt to anyone who left a partner on the run, usual suspects guilty again. The conditions we had on Saturday were just the time when it is important to stick together; the buddy system which Simon talked about in a mental health situation was just as relevant on the beach. (We will not be inviting anyone back in 2018 who left a partner on the beach.) Luckily, our true stalwart marshals were there for them, equipped with suncream, bananas, cheers and even a fancy dress outfit or two. (What happens in the woods stays in the woods, so we are told.) Our trailing pair of runners were given two bottles of chilled water at every checkpoint, which they found miraculous, as the temperature had indeed soared. A special mention to ladies' marshal prizewinners Sam Gurney and Vicki Ringer who were at the beach outpost. Luckily, though, there was wind on the Sahara straight and it was blowing right in your faces. The race for 1st place was tight, tighter than anyone wanted, wrong turns, lost partners, mirages in the desert, it was all happening out on the beach. The winners of the fastest run were Andrew Nunn and Jamie Carter with a time of 1:09:45, second in the run leg were Simon Able and John O'Neal and third were Lex Brun and Matt Noble-Clark with 1:13:26. Last year's winner with Niall, Dave Walker, came and was the medal giver as you all came over the finish line as Superheroes and were rewarded with Vitacoco.

Ian Williamson and his massage team were having to work hard as the day was still hot. The RQ Capital champions supper was delicious with Graves hog roast and the usual scrum of extra supper ticket administration. Ben Zaven Crane bought the party to the marquee with his eclectic and spot on prizegiving sound track.

Mark and Simon did a great job of the speeches; the stories came out of the missing partners, the puncture repairers and the new friends made along the way. The Lord Nelson Trophy had passed on to new hands. Niall has stepped away from his unbroken line of wins. The Ormegoddon Boys, Chris Langlois and Jon Holt, had bought a special Guernsey bottle of gin to hand on as the Spirit prize to the newly voted favourites, who had won the hearts of the marshals and competitors for taking part in the event in the true spirit of the Superhero.

Then all decorum went out of the window; tables were dragged outside for the view of the flags on the marsh, the Pink Ladies were back behind the bar, crutches were being raised above the dance floor and the teenagers were night swimming in the creek. The Charles Miller Rose moment came at 2pm after the gate crashers were ousted, Superhero hats were awarded to the special clearer uppers and a translator was required in order for us to communicate with Pink Lady Matthew. It was the latest after party we have ever had and did we mention your T shirts glow in the dark! You have all been marvellous and posted all your photos on Instagram and Facebook. Thank you for your messages; we really appreciate them and tried to pass as many as possible on to the Pink Ladies.

The great fact of it was that we all had a lot of fun, even if it didn't feel like it at the time. It was hot, gruelling, some say the hardest Superhero yet; some didn't make it but all of those who tried, all of those that did and those that helped make it happen for everyone else, are all Superheroes.

In order for us to keep helping people, keeping that Superhero spirit alive, please keep fundraising, passing on those wellwishers' sponsorship to the Norfolk Superhero Foundation, raising money for small local mental health and wellbeing charities and to end it all and to say thank you to you all for all your brilliant enthusiasm and thanks, have a little look at the video Drift Media has put together for us.

PS We have got the date for next year and it's the 16th June, which is a big tide but, shhhhhhhh, don't tell anyone else, otherwise how are we going to fit you all in?

**Jean Ashley**

**Lord Nelson Trophy:** 1 To Be Advised, 4:33:57. 2 Ugly 50, 4:34:29.

3 Cold Chips n Dip, 4:37:29.

**Dame Edna Trophy:** 1 No Payne No Gain, 4:42:23. 2 Small & Hall, 4:59:23.

3 Tri Harder, 5:06:23.

**Lady Hamilton Cup:** 1 In Preparation, 5:16:09. 2 Brunettes, 5:34:08.

3 Science Friction, 6:04:38.

**Zimmer Trophy:** 1 Blood Sweat & Beers, 5:13:31. 2 Beer Brothers, 5:17:52.

3 Zimmer of Hope, 5:25:50.

**Local Trophy:** 1 Cold Chips n Dip, 4:37:29.

**Wensum Plate:** 1 Cheese Crumpets, 5:42:53.

**Spirit of the Superhero:** 1 Young Guns, 6:25:39.

**Woodenspoon:** 1 Moobs Like Jagger, 7:39:13.