



Ironman World Championship 2014 – Brad Wall

My journey to the 2014 Ironman World Championship began at Mandurah 70.3 in 2013 as this was one of the very few 70.3 races in the world to be offering Ironman World Championship qualifying spots. Finishing 2nd in the 25-29 age group had me qualifying for Hawaii for the 5th time. I then followed this up with another 2nd place at Ironman Western Australia a month later which would have qualified me again for this race. From the time of qualifying to racing things in my house changed quite drastically (for the better) and we welcomed our son Lenny into the world only 7 days after Ironman WA. Training is an exercise in time management at the best of times, adding a new born into the mix certainly did add a layer of complexity to things but I would not have had it any other way.



The trip

This was to be our first trip as a family; so it was to be Lenny's first time on a plane. What better way to experience flying for the first time than a combined 17hrs of flying over a 24hr period. I am pleased to report he was a little legend on all the flights charming the flight attendants and entertaining all of the passengers. We arrived in Kona on the Wednesday, 10 days prior to race day. I have stuck to this schedule for the last 3 times I have been to Hawaii as it seems to work for me from jet lag/heat acclimatisation point of view.

Apart from Lenny picking up a virus on the flight leading to a few sleepless nights early on, the lead up to race day was reasonably uneventful. Having been to Kona several times before you become quite attached to the place so it was great to be back riding the Queen K, running down Alii drive and swimming at Dig Me beach.

Race Day

The night before and race morning is the time I despise the most. I suffer from severe nerves waking up in a cold sweat several times during the night progressing to feeling nauseous right up until race start. It is something I thought would disappear the more experienced I got, but after 11 Ironman's and 15+ 70.3/Half Ironman's it isn't any better! Having Lenny there actually helped on race morning as it gave me a nice distraction. Less than 30 minutes before race start I was changing a nappy!



Swim (59:34): This was reasonably uneventful which is always good to report. I felt ok in the water without feeling brilliant, I managed to stay within the large pack that formed approx. 500m after the start right through for the remainder of the 3.8km. Getting out the water in 59min was a bit of a shock as I had expected to swim quicker than this. However early on the bike I saw 3 athletes from Perth that I always swim a similar time to so I knew then that there must have been a current in the water (which I later find out there was – everyone swam slower on average)

Bike (5:00:28): The bike has really been a focus of mine in the lead up to Hawaii, in recent years my swim and run have progressed well but I have felt my bike has not progressed as much as I would have liked. Speaking with my coach Courtney Ogden after Busselton 70.3 we changed up my bike training quite a lot to try and improve this leg, which I am happy to report, worked very well. The conditions on the bike were reported to be the worst in 10 years. There was times where I was afraid to take my hands off the bars to grab a drink. We rode through a small tail wind section at 65-70km/hr on flat road, only to be reduced to 20km not 5-10min later as the wind decided to turn into a headwind. Despite it being a tough year I was able to ride 14 minutes quicker than I did in 2012. The change in bike training is working! This has given me great confidence moving forward.



Run (3:23:57): I can usually tell pretty early on if I have my run legs. I felt great for the first 10 minutes or so before panic set in at the first aid station where I came to a dead stop due to severe hamstring cramps. I immediately started stretching but at the same time panicking as usually once I start cramping that is the end of any chance of a decent run. Fortunately after 8-10km the cramps were gone however at no stage did the run feel comfortable. It was a struggle from very early on which turned things into a mental game. From the mid-point of the run it turned into surviving from aid station to aid station (2km apart). I was able to run a reasonable pace between aid stations but the slowing at aid stations got longer which really hurts your marathon time. I was sitting in the top 10 in my age group at this stage and top 100 overall which is where I wanted to be. Unfortunately the wheels fell off and I dropped to 17th in my age group and 137th overall. Those last 40 spots were all lost in the last 10km. The promising part of the run was for as bad as it felt and the trouble I had I was still able to run a 3hr 23min marathon. Not as fast as I wanted but far from a disaster.

Overall I was happy with my day. The night before the race I told Nat I wanted to finish in 9:15-9:30. But for a 9:15 everything was going to have to go my way, including race conditions. Well it was one of the toughest days on the bike in Hawaii and a struggle fest on the run so to still finish in **9:30:08** was quite pleasing. Although I dropped a number of positions late in the marathon, just to be in contention for a top 100 overall placing when racing the best 2000+ athletes in the world means that I am getting somewhere as a triathlete.

I am very fortunate to have a great team around me whose sponsorship and support make this journey possible and all the more enjoyable. To Budget Forklifts, Knightcorp Insurance Brokers, RentWA, Shotz and Nimblewear thank you for your ongoing support. To my very understanding family, Nat without your support this would not be possible. Lenny is too young to understand yet but having him there at his first race was a massive motivation and sharing the experience with him is something I will never forget.

