
A DREAM COME TRUE

XTERRA TAIWAN RACE REPORT

**Xterra World Tour Round -
First Professional Victory**

LEADING UP

Since crossing the line at Xterra Rotorua in April, I've spent the last 6 months training at home with specific intentions to improve key aspects of my swim and run performance. It's actually been a super fun time at home and I'm so glad I did it. Spending more time with the people I love and settling into a consistent routine has undoubtedly allowed me to evolve as an athlete and a person which I'm hoping will set a strong foundation for my career going forward into next year and beyond.

It's no secret that the most pressing issue holding my performance back was my RUN. There have been plenty of occasions in recent times where I had set myself up for good results after solid swims and strong rides, only to be let down by a weak run. So obviously my training priority was to work on my running ability. To do this I incorporated a strength and conditioning routine into my training and focused on incrementally increasing my run load. While it wasn't without a few bumps in the road, I'm feeling super confident in my running ability now and it was awesome to have the opportunity to head to Taiwan and test out where my run stacks up now.





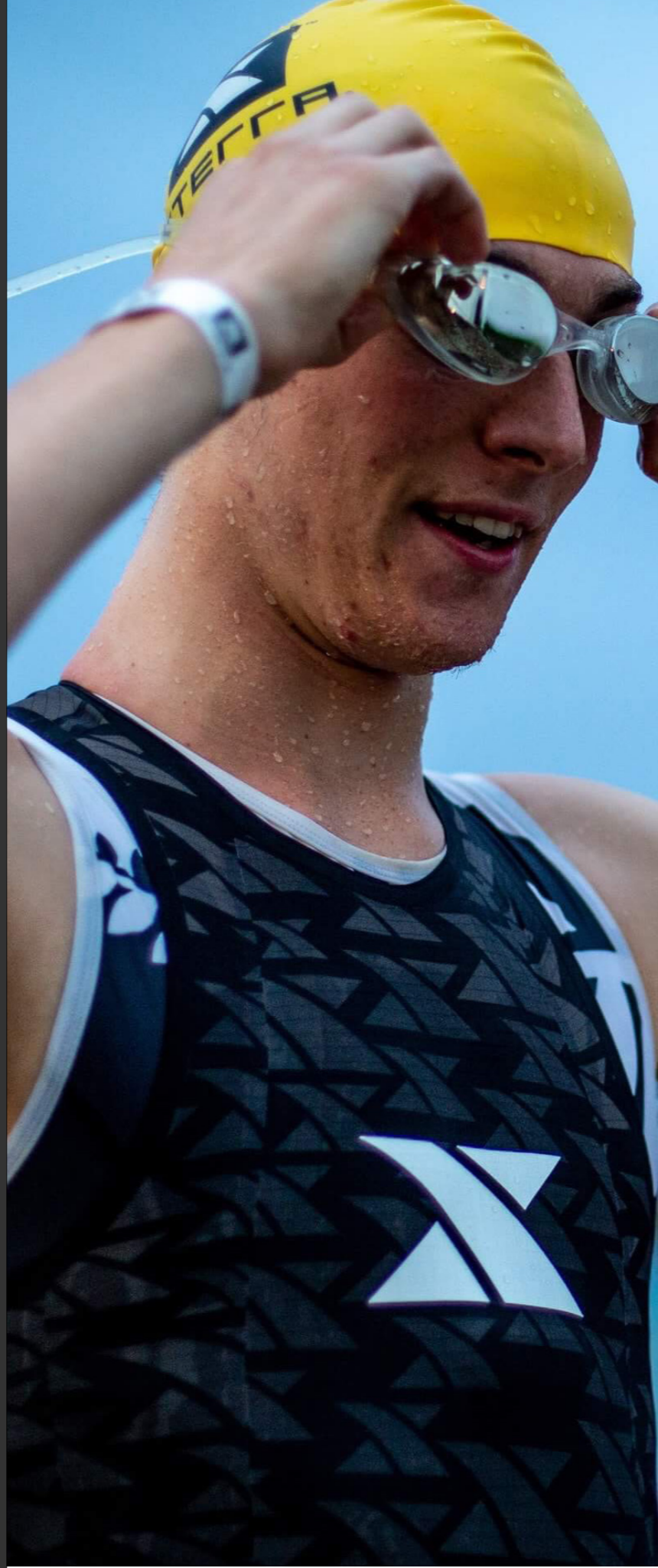
DIVING IN

With my bike racked, shoes ready and goggles tight, all there was left to do was get racing. Spending the last 6 months at home had allowed me to enjoy a lot of hours in the pool with my squad and coaches at Swim Rotorua. By virtue of dedicating a whole load more time to the water I've actually learnt to love swimming and was definitely excited to see if the gains I'd made in the pool would translate into better race performance.

The course here was a 2x750m lap format at a surf beach, with smooth formed waves near the shore and rough choppy ocean at the furthest turning buoys. Diving into this race I knew I was up against the best swimmer in the world of Xterra with a guy named Ben Allen on the start line. I can't think of any race he's done where he hasn't dominated the swim and led out of the water, especially in rough ocean conditions. I see him as a real benchmark in the swim and so it was a great challenge to try and compete with him. After a strong start and settling into my work smoothly, it was a massive confidence booster to find myself looking into his eyes and going stroke for stroke with him as we finished the first lap. The pace was fast enough for us to open up a significant gap to the chase pack, but I could tell we were both super calm and relaxed as we dove into the last half of the swim. Ben pushed the pace significantly harder on the 2nd lap and while I was capable of matching his accelerations in the calmer waters closer to the shore, his exceptional skills in the rough water at the far end of the course were too hard to compete with. Instead of pushing myself too deep in the red zone and compromising my efficiency I decided to not chase full gas, but rather just accelerate to the point where I was working at a comfortable intensity and not losing any significant time.

**“EMERGING FROM
THE WATER I
TOOK GREAT
CONFIDENCE
FROM MY SWIM
PERFORMANCE
AND WAS
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EXCEPTIONALLY
RELAXED GOING
INTO THE RIDE”**

**1:14/100m
AVERAGE SWIM PACE**



Leaving the water we had an 800m run up some steep and large steps that went through the courtyard of an oceanside bar. Before turning onto the now carpeted main 4-lane highway to run against the flow of traffic towards transition.

I could see Ben 20 seconds ahead of me, but felt no need to chase. Taking the time to compose myself and prepare for the ride was my focus.

**“TAKING THE TIME TO
COMPOSE MYSELF AND
ASSESS THE RACE
SITUATION, I COULD
FORM MY STRATEGY
FOR THE RIDE”**

“ROLLING OUT ONTO THE BIKE JUST 0:20 BEHIND BEN AND 1:30 AHEAD OF SOME STRONG CHASING RIDERS, IT WAS GOING TO BE AN EXCITING RACE”

The first 6km of this bike course was on lightly undulating and twisting roads as we worked our way into the Kenting national park. Turning off the road we then went steeply uphill on clay based climbs with lots of loose shale rock scattered on the surface. Fortunately my body was responding nicely and while we were obviously working hard, I never felt like I was over-reaching which allowed me the opportunity to spend most of my time 5metres behind Ben. Judging my pace off his effort, but more importantly watching his lines and adjusting mine accordingly. This definitely saved me both mental and physical energy as I could typically spend less time on the slippery lines, as essentially I had someone to test them in front of me. Cresting the first summit we then descended on fresh handmade trails to a semi dried up river bed. I knew the caliber of riders behind us was strong and while it was great to pace ourselves and ride conservatively on the climbs, I didn't want to give them an easy ride to catch up. So I decided to increase the pace on the descents and try to put everyone under a bit more pressure. Obviously I didn't want to throw caution to the wind because it was important to stay smooth and preserve the bikes on a course that could easily rip your tyre's to shreds or force a mistake resulting in a nasty crash.


17.7 KM/H
AVG SPEED

192 BPM
MAXIMUM HEART RATE

When I arrived at the exceptionally rocky riverbed, I had established a small gap that allowed me the luxury of being able to ride easier across the harsh terrain and minimise my risk of puncturing or making a mistake. While I focused on staying smooth, Ben obviously worked a bit harder on this section and as we exited the riverbed we were once again able to resume working together to conquer the final few climbs.



+547M
VERTICAL GAIN



TRANSITIONING TO THE RUN I THOUGHT I HAD OPENED UP A SMALL GAP ON THE FINAL DESCENT AND MAYBE HAD A 10SECOND LEAD TO WORK WITH... LITTLE DID I KNOW THAT BEN HAD SUFFERED A MEGA CRASH BEHIND ME.

Time splits off the bike:

- 1st - LEWIS RYAN 1:46:42**
- 2nd - Ben Allen + 2:34**
- 3rd - Doug Hall + 7:42**
- 4th - Takahiro Ogasawara + 9:40**
- 5th - Taylor Charlton + 10:04**

“PUSHING MYSELF TO THE LIMIT, I THOUGHT I HAD THE CHASERS BREATHING DOWN MY NECK”

R U N

The level of runners at this race was top shelf, with a whole host of guys from backgrounds in 70.3 and ITU road racing. But, I've worked a lot on my running this year through both time on my feet and time in the gym trying to improve my running economy and functional strength on the steep terrain. I opted not to practice the run course in the lead up to the race as I prioritised keeping my run legs on ice. So when we went steeply uphill for long time straight out of transition I got a bit of shock! It was a whole load harder than I had imagined, but the perfect chance to try and implement the new run strength gains I'd made recently. These were the type of hills that I'd used to look at and think "okay, just make it to the top" but now I was in the mindset to push up them as fast as possible. Striding out over the top of the mountain I started the technical descent back in to town. Running strongly on the rough terrain I managed to get to the final 3km still out front on my own. Which is when I got a time split to say "relax young fella, you have a big gap." Obviously it's hard to relax because you have no idea how much a "big gap" actually is and you're trying your best just to make it to the damn finish line that doesn't seem to be getting any closer... But man let me tell you, it's an unbelievable feeling to hit that final kilometer knowing that you're going to lift the tape. All of a sudden that Hamstring that felt like it was on the verge of cramping up for the last 10minutes, feels as free as a bird. It truly was a spectacular feeling and one that I'll cherish forever!



CROSSING THE LINE



Cruising down the finish chute in front of all the Taiwanese people, you would've thought I'd just won my home race. The atmosphere was electric and you could feel the pure happiness in the air! I vividly remember running down the chute and thinking "oh man, what am I meant to do with this tape". I'm a total rookie at lifting the tape, which definitely showed when I got it stuck on my face for a while. But, once I finally managed to lift it over my head, I felt in that one moment like I was invincible.

It's actually an incredibly humbling experience to be part of an event like XTERRA TAIWAN. To see the sheer passion and enthusiasm these great people have for putting on a spectacular race, to feel the genuine hospitality and love in every hug from a local, to witness hundreds of volunteers nailing by hand 800m of carpet into a 4lane highway just so that the athletes would be more comfortable, to kiss the forehead of a baby just so that family would "forever have a winner", to be part of the XTERRA TAIWAN family is an honour and a privilege and I truly couldn't be more grateful.

It makes very proud to be able to lift the tape on behalf of everyone who supports me and makes events like this possible, as a way to say THANK YOU for everything you've done to help me achieve my dreams.

XTERRA