

Atkinson brothers lead the way

Ana Leaf Triathlon Series, St Catherines

Twice Olympic champion and elder of the famous triathlon brothers Alistair Brownlee just missed out on a medal at the European Championships Triathlon in Glasgow on Friday, but closer to home Jersey's answer to the Brownlee Brothers were showing the way in a new local triathlon format.

Saturday evening at St Catherines saw a Jersey Triathlon Club event inspired by the international Super League Triathlon which returns next month. The event consisted of three short and fast triathlon races with the sport order mixed up each time and with only those making the qualifying standard racing in the final event. Because of the short race format certain junior age categories were also able to race head to head against senior athletes in an event well suited to those with youth on their side.

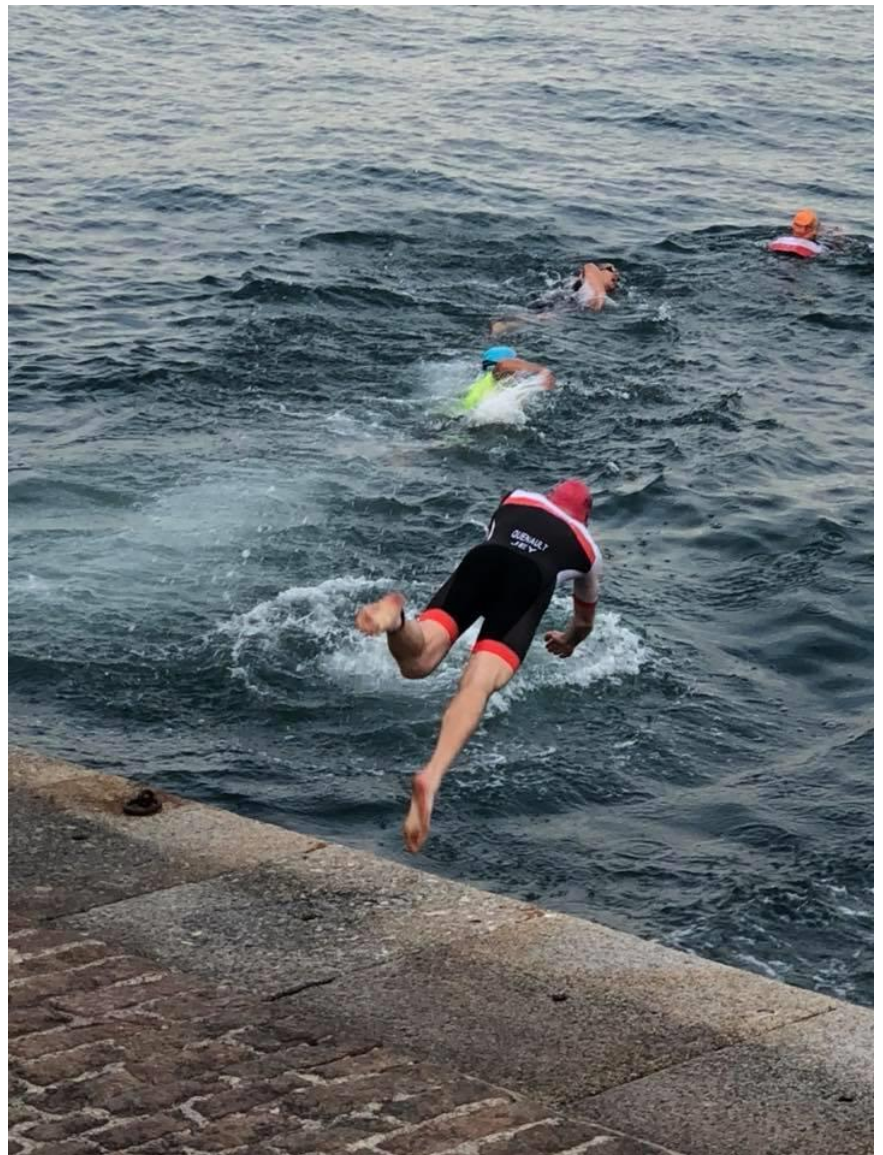


Left: Athletes prepare for the start of Race 1

Race 1 was the traditional swim-bike-run format but with just a 200m swim, 6km draft legal bike on a short and technical course and a final 1km sprint to the line. As expected multiple British national swim champion Isaac Dodds led the way in the swim with a gaggle of junior swimmers following including Harry Worth, Lily Scott, Adele Maher and the Atkinson brothers; Will and Tom. Just 10 seconds further back was another grouping of Sol Silvester and Freddie Lucas (both Juniors) and the leading senior men Doug Gorman and Ian Jones. The leading men quickly formed a group and were joined by Aaron Gouveia and together they caught the leading junior riders. Harry Worth was unlucky to take a tumble on one of the fast and technical corners putting him out of action. Gouveia eventually made his escape building a small gap going into the 1km run but it was not enough, the three junior athletes (Dodds and both Atkinsons) were able to overhaul him and ease back before the line safe in the knowledge that the three automatic qualification spots were theirs. Gouveia just pipped Gorman for fourth in a tight finish. Scott and Maher worked well together on the bike, keeping a 10 second gap to leading female senior athlete Jo Gorrod going onto the run. Gorrod managed to run down Maher but not Scott, another recent national swimming champion, who held on to take the win.

With 11 qualifiers through to the final race the field lining up for the start of the second race was much smaller, but with just 10 minutes recovery there were clear signs of fatigue on the start line as the athletes faced a run, cycle then a swim. With the juniors removed from the equation it was a cagey and tactical 1km run with only Michael Conidaris willing to commit as he built up a small lead over the rest of the contenders; Wayne and Dale Quennault, Mark Syvret, Liam Smith, Vaughan Robinson and Richard Worth all coming into transition together. Further back a group of four ladies were also covered by a gap of just over 10 seconds going onto the bike led by Lisa Mansell and Philippa Worth. Once again the drafting format meant that the cyclists formed into groups but tired legs resulted in the groups fragmenting slightly towards the end with small gaps of two to three seconds separating the leading men as they came through. Sam Lee made the most of her cycling ability to come through the field and build a comfortable gap to the other ladies to take victory and qualification ahead of Philippa Worth who finished with the fastest swim of all in race 2. With a variety of entries to the water, ranging from graceful dives to less effective dive-bombs the men's race dropped all tactical pretence as it became a sprint through the water to bag the remaining qualifying slots. A strong swim by Robinson saw him take the race win ahead of Syvret and Richard Worth.

Right: Entering the swim mid-race is not often practised by triathletes.



For those qualifying from the second race it was, again, just a 10 minute recovery (including a quick reorganisation of transition equipment) before the final race of the evening while the race 1 qualifiers had enjoyed the advantage of spectating in race 2. The final event was packed with quality with only the leading 14 men and 6 ladies on the start line as the event order was mixed up once again, this time a cycle followed by a swim and finally the run. With a sprint into a narrow transition to start all 20 athletes squeezed in to collect helmets and bikes and head straight out onto the road. Some nimble work by Aaron Gouvea saw him first to mount his bike but it was a leading pack of nine men who raced the 6km course together in a great spectacle for those watching, with another group of five men 30 seconds back. Jo Gorrod built a lead in the ladies race on the bike section with Scott, Maher and Lee together at the end of the cycle. The men's race was blown wide apart as the junior men once again used their dominance in the water to great effect, as they exited the water for the final 1km run leg it was older brother Will Atkinson leading from Tom and Isaac Dodds. Ian Jones, another strong swimmer, was the first senior athlete to exit the water but he was concerned more about who was behind him rather than having thoughts of a podium finish. Fastest run of all for Thomas Atkinson was consolation as he was unable to catch his older brother who took the overall win with Dodds secure in third place. Fast finishing Doug Gorman took fourth spot and was the first athlete older than 16 years of age home ahead of Jones and Gouveia. In the ladies' race Scott and Maher reduced Gorrod's lead considerably on the swim but a strong final run from Gorrod was enough to reverse the race 1 result with Gorrod taking victory in the ladies race ahead of 14 year old Scott. 16 year old Maher completed the podium.



Left: an evening race made for an interesting background as the sun went down at St Catherine's.

Event Director Dave Holmes thanked all of the marshals whose efforts helped put on a successful event, with additional thanks to the Parish of St Martin, Ports of Jersey and local residents, businesses, clubs and venue users for their generous support of an event which required the road to be closed for 90 minutes.

Summary of results (age group in brackets)

Men

1. Will Atkinson (Youth)
2. Tom Atkinson (Tristars 3)
3. Isaac Dodds (Tristars 3)

Ladies

1. Jo Gorrod (Veteran)
2. Lily Scott (Tristars 3)
3. Adele Maher (Junior)