

Kirsten King's Adventures

Questars Chilterns Adventure Race

After a successful introduction to adventure racing on the South Downs in May (with Tony Harris & Ray as well as my partner from Cranleigh CC) I took part in the Questars race in the Chilterns, near Aylesbury, on July 1st, a mere fortnight after the Luxembourg 70.3 race. The format is for three disciplines, mountain biking, trail running and kayaking, to be taken in whatever order the competitors choose (within the constraints of a fixed kayak time slot), with the aim of navigating around an area with a course map, finding a series of electronic checkpoints to gain points. The winner is not the fastest around a course, but the competitor, or team (up to 4 can compete together), who gets the highest points total.

Last time we got a whopping 50 point penalty for being late back on the kayak stage so we were determined not to repeat that, however disaster struck at the beginning of the kayak when we lost our map, sunk without trace in the murky canal. Thankfully a kind team of two in the kayak transition had a spare map which they let us use, so we were able to continue. After some challenging terrain (though I have to say not as hard as the South Downs) and confusing woodland trails on our bikes, we got back to transition with an hour and a half available for the run, and improvement on last time when we only had half an hour. We still only managed three checkpoints though, as although we felt good and could have run more, the next checkpoint was too far away to be able to get there and back in time before incurring more time penalty points, so we made our way back to base at a leisurely cool-down pace.

We may not have won anything, but it was another great day out, and I would thoroughly recommend giving it a go next year – it's a triathlon with a fun difference!

Velothon Wales

Am I mad? Just one week after my adventure race I took part in Velothon Wales, a 140km (87 miles) road cycle (race? Of course not – not much!), with a bunch of friends from Cranleigh CC including Gail Van der Leeden and Mike Savage. The course was on closed roads, from Cardiff through Newport, on to Usk and up The Tumble, a 6km long climb, then on to Caerphilly and up Caerphilly Mountain, the third steepest road climb in Wales, at 80 miles.

The first section was pan-flat and we averaged over 20mph for the first 40 miles, riding in a pack with the CCC train. Once the hills kicked in though we split up and the average inevitably dropped, but I was pleased to get 17.4mph overall. There were three feed stations, but I only stopped at one, to refill a bottle and grab a bit of fruit. It was good to have a little jog there too. Climbing Caerphilly Mountain reminded me of giving birth, desperately wanting to have a bit of a break before continuing, but not doing so. However after the ascent, about a mile later my legs decided to make their voices heard through cramp. My left leg locked up and I had to stop and stretch, but couldn't even get off the bike as the right leg was threatening to join the party! After a few minutes I managed to get going again and finished without further incident in a time of 5:12.

