# English Duathlon Championships, Ashbourne, 28th April 2012

The inaugural English Duathlon Championships held in the Derbyshire Peaks was my toughest race so far this season, both in terms of the course and the weather conditions. So I was delighted to be crowned English Age Group champion (30-34) and finish 5th overall.

It was not an ideal week of preparation, having sprained my ankle in a training run on Tuesday, and then crashed my bike in torrential rain on my commute home from work on Wednesday! An emergency appointment with my sports therapist for massage and K-tape before we set off for the event on Friday was necessary!

We then spent 4 hours in rush hour traffic on the M1, but managed to get to Ashbourne in time to drive/ride the course… in the rain and dark! Conditions which made the technical descents even more ‘exciting’ than normal!

Thankfully we awoke on Saturday to dry conditions, albeit blustery and cold. I was somewhat drained, bruised and battered, but at least I was on the start line.

The race began with a tough and hilly 12km trail run around Carsington Water. The most challenging section was actually the final flat 2km across the dam, where the wind was so strong athletes had to lean sideways. It was so cold that it gave me an ice-cream headache by the time I reached my bike! The women’s field contained some particularly strong runners in the newly crowned European Triathlon Champion Parys Edwards, and former international Elite duathlete Esther Evans (who would go on to finish 1st and 2nd overall), so I was reasonably pleased to enter T1 in 3rd place.

I was slightly miffed on reaching my bike that someone had swiped my Banoffee TORQ Gel from the top tube, but what can you do? Not a lot except get on with the race, and make do with an energy drink!

For once the bike course contained some decent climbs and proper technical challenges, a refreshing change from the flat TT courses which seem to characterise many championships. It included the notorious hill climb up to Middleton Top and the ‘Nimble Jack’ descent - which thankfully was much less scary in the daylight and dry! Normally this kind of course would suit me well, but today there was nowhere to hide from tired legs. A disappointing bike split saw me enter T2 in 6th place.

I was however pleased with my final 4km run, which was 2nd fastest of the day and brought me back up into 5th place overall and first in my Age Group. It’s not every day you beat the run split of GB Olympian Will Clarke either… are there bonus points for that?!