# British Aquathlon Championships – 19th May 2012

The National Aquathlon Championships was my first open water swim race this year - and first chance to test out the new Zone 3 wetsuit!

I had been putting off open water swim training in the hope that lake temperatures would rise above 14 degrees - about my limit for still being able to feel my extremities after 750m! Unfortunately with all the rain and no sun, the lakes remained stubbornly cold. With the Aquathlon being so early in the season, I only managed to get one practise in the lake beforehand.

However I arrived at the venue the night before feeling optimistic. The run course was to my liking - partly off-road and with a decent hill in it. The water looked a little foreboding and choppy but apparently it was almost 14 degrees!

I managed to pitch my tent just as the rain set in for the night - strangely enough I was the only camper in the entire field! But at least I would get a lie in on the race morning.

It rained all night, and when I woke up, it was still raining, unfortunately this meant the lake temperature had dropped closer to 12 degrees. Plus we would not have any sun to dry us out on the run! As we were called to the start, most athletes chose to forego a warmup swim and didn’t get in until the last minute. I was already thinking, I can’t wait to get out onto the run!

I had been hoping my improved pool speed would carry over to the open water, however as the gun went I was struggling to function properly in the cold. Not only can it affect the physical ability to swim, but can also freeze the brain! I felt quite disorientated as the field, including several elite swimmers and triathletes, sprinted off at the start.

I eventually settled down in the wake of another swimmer, however after the turn buoy I realised far too late that she had gone way off course. A reminder to do my own sighting rather than just follow someone else! By the time I exited the water - 2 minutes down on the leaders - I couldn’t feel my hands or feet. I was also quite dizzy so I was very grateful there were marshals pulling us out of the water!

Transition was fairly confusing, again due to a cold brain, but I was very happy about the quick-releasing cuffs on the wetsuit! Once I had managed to get my shoes on (not so easy with numb hands and feet!) my only thought was how many athletes can I catch? It’s always a weird feeling running with completely numb feet, like running on stumps! But it didn’t seem to slow me down too much, and I was soon into my stride and passing other girls (and the majority of men too!).

The run was a two-lap affair and plenty of opportunity to see who’s ahead to catch. Elite World Duathlon Champion Katie Hewison was storming through the field (after exiting the water in 7th) to take the overall win.

I was very pleased to find out at the finish, that my run time was second only to Katie’s, and enough to move me up to 2nd place in my age category. However it was not really enough (in my book!) to make up for a disappointing swim.

I had finished in 10th place overall, but given that only 50 seconds separated 2nd to 11th places- it shows not only the depth of fast athletes in the event, but the difference a better transition, or better sighting on the swim may have made! At least I have plenty of improvements to work on for next time… and I hope some warmer water.