

## 2012 ETU Cross Championships

This report is intended to provide information to prepare for the 2013 ITU Cross World Championships which will be held on the same course as the 2012 ETU Championships. I did the open triathlon which was the same course as the championship, but at a different time. It is appropriate that the race is called the Beach Challenge as the beach and its sand are major factors which differ from most Cross or Xterra venues.

Before getting into the particulars of each course a few general comments should be considered. They have built quite a program around the courses with many local races to provide experience for local competitors. This year there was an mtb crit on Wednesday before the triathlon which might be worth doing or, at least, watching to gain experience on the course and see people's equipment choices. Check the web to see if there will be events leading up to the 2013 ITU Championships. Expect rain. It rained the days before and after the race this year, but race day was fairly dry and overcast. Also be prepared for 16-52 mph winds. It is also a public beach, so spectators and bathers will be around and sometimes on the courses. The courses were not marked before the race, so get good intel/guide/maps/gps tracks for pre-riding/running, then expect a few changes on race day.

I found the Dutch very hospitable and many are English speakers, so it is an easy location to visit. Most major roads have a separate lane for bicycles and another for pedestrians. It makes traffic lights a little complicated, but the Haag is very bike friendly.

### Swim

The swim is in the North Sea, but water temperatures were comfortable, just below the maximum allowable for wet-suit use. However the shore has a very gentle slope so you'll be running and wading for a long time through breakers. 3-4 ft breakers were normal up to 150 yards from shore so expect to dive under more than one on your way out and it is also a good idea to look back as you're coming in to shore so you don't get a surprise tumble. Goggles may get rearranged on your face, too. Tidal and shore currents combined with the wind make for navigational challenges. Again, come early and practice. The smallish buoys are often out of sight in the troughs of the waves. The start chute was not aligned with the first buoy, so many people turned out of the chute to get a better line on shore before entering the water.

### T1

The experienced people had a rectangular plastic basin with water to get the sand off before putting shoes on. If you're a shoes in the pedals type be prepared for lots of sand on your feet when you mount. There were no carpet runners this year, but maybe ITU will change that. It also seems acceptable to use somebody else's basin if there is one nearby.

### Bike

Sand, sand, and more sand, is the major theme, but of different types. Along the waterline it is firm enough to ride on. Getting from waterline to dunes and back the sand is soft and rutted to the point where only a few racers were able to ride the whole way. Exiting transition is also soft and the second loop goes through the same area. Once into the dunes most of the sand is firm, but there were a few soft spots. There's not much elevation gain or curvy single track. I think there was one smallish rock drop and a few stairs. There was quite a bit of pavement and golf cart trail. The stairs near the beach typically have ramps down the middle which are rideable. Neither the crit nor cross courses ever went up the beach stair ramps. Passing opportunities are ample for most of the bike course.

Their tire recommendations were Schwalbe Fast Fred, replaced by Furious Fred, and Super Moto. Check the web for the tread pattern, but both are pretty smooth. Big Apple was also mentioned. Very much tire profile adds lots of resistance on the waterline sand. There were one or two short, muddy uphill parts, but low profile worked for them, too. Consider going a bit wider to give more float over the sand. Though there were some age groupers on Surly's, they didn't seem to do very well, but their pressures looked way too high to me.

As for the bike, there's no need for suspension or concern about tight turns so HT 29 is probably the best option. Bring extra maintenance supplies to deal with the sand which gets into everything the mud hasn't already filled. The mud, by the way is the light European stuff which makes a slippery mess but doesn't pack up in your frame like the clay in the US.

It wouldn't hurt to practice cyclocross mounts and dismounts because the chances are you'll use them in the sand. Also, consider moving your seat back to unweight the front tire and keep it from digging in.

T2

Dismount and run through sand again. Consider a basin. Or grit and bear it.

Run

The run is about one third waterline sand, a little pavement, and the rest is dune sand, mostly horse trails, so pretty soft. There are some hills which are also soft.

Weather

The week I was there we had one or two bright, sunny days and the rest were overcast with zero to heavy rain. Watch the forecasts and how they change to get an idea of the range of weather you might be dealing with. It wouldn't hurt to watch the wave and ocean forecasts, too because the sea could get nasty.