

## 2014 Horst ETU Sprint Distance Duathlon European Championships

April 12, 2014

It's not fellrunning, it's not trail running, in fact it even took place in a country with no hills but undaunted our super Chairwoman, Steph Scott, having been chosen to represent Great Britain, claimed Bronze in her age category following a scintillating performance on bike and foot at this years Sprint Distance Duathlon European Championships held in the quaintly named town of Horst aan de Maas in the Netherlands. Many congratulations.



In her own words;

The distances were a 4.8 km run (2 laps), followed by 20 km on bike finishing with a 2.8 km run.

It was a fast and furious start to the race with all age group athletes, male and female, squashed into a narrow cobbled street for a mass start. After about 50m there was a 90 degree right turn followed by another one a similar distance later. The run route consisted of many similar turns around various buildings and even a 180 degree spin around a traffic island then through the

cobbled transition area and onto lap 2 with my main aim being to stay upright and not trip over someone or something!

I had a long run round the transition area to my bike (which was good for me as it meant less distance to run out pushing the bike). A quick glance along the rack gave me an idea that I was well up in the run as there were lots of bikes still racked. I managed to mount the bike in the correct zone and the next test was to stay on the bike around a tight loop of the town and up the cobbled streets.



The bike course eventually looped round onto the open roads which were much flatter than our local rides back home!! The wind was strong in places and my lack of technical cycling skills meant that I lost ground on the many sharp turns. There was even a 'dead turn' round a bollard to contend with. Having reccied the bike course I knew that there was about 3 km left at the turn and that I had to pedal like crazy to expend every bit of energy on the last bit of the bike loop. As we came back into the town there were numerous speed bumps and turns to contend with whilst undoing bike shoes and

preparing to jump off.

I ran as fast as I could over the cobbles flung my bike back on the rack and thought I saw 3 bikes already racked. Trainers on and only a short run to go! A surreal moment when a lady in my age category was at the roadside cheering me on - how did she get there? Could she already have finished?! (It turned out both her front forks had snapped !! She thinks she hit a barrier on the town loop at the start of the cycle!!)

At this point your legs feel like someone else's - and unfortunately not someone fast and light! I considered walking and realised how ridiculous that would look! I also have a 'good' record of 4th places in 'championship' races - it's a very annoying place to finish!! I knew 2.8 km wouldn't take me long and I knew at least 2 in my age group had passed me on the bike and possibly more. Was there any chance of catching anyone?

There was just one lap plus the finishing straight and although my legs felt wobbly, I'd practiced this feeling and know that if I relax I can still run at a decent pace. I managed to pass a few men and ladies as we twisted around the town. The only way of telling if someone was in your age group was by guessing from their race number, so I knew that ladies with a number close to but less than mine were my age.

As I passed a group of 3 ladies, one of them tried to stick with me. Her number was difficult to read but I guessed she was in my race and my legs really didn't want a fight! Luckily I knew the run route as I'd walked the course. I knew there was 1km to go and my legs still knew that they didn't want to run fast for 1000 m especially not over the cobbled section!!

Having come this far, I really didn't want to be fourth if beating this lady meant getting a medal. I had caught her quite easily but clearly she wasn't going to give up without a fight! So I steadily picked up the pace, taking care across the cobbles and once we were onto the straight road through the town I tried to run at a strong pace and just hoped that she would not have a scintillating sprint finish. Luckily for me, she didn't !!

There was then an agonising wait for the results! Had I counted the bikes correctly? Where was the broken bike? How many were in front that I didn't know about?

I'd given it my best on the bike but my split was the slowest but luckily my legs were the fastest on both runs and that last push to the finish had secured me the bronze medal in what had turned out to be a very close race. Little did I know that I was just over a minute away from winning gold. The next 3 ladies all finished within 60 seconds which is pretty close after 1 hour and 12 minutes of racing!!

So a bronze medal in the European Championships in only my third duathlon and automatic qualification for next years champs ! We'll see!