

Manhattan Project ultra endurance:



Swim 28 miles around Manhattan Island

Bike 521 miles to Boston and across to Albany

Run 145 miles along the Hudson River to Time Square.

On Saturday morning, 1st June 2019 at 06:30, Craig and I attended a '20 Bridges' pre-race briefing with the other swimmers and were introduced to the rest of the support crew for the swim. Craig is my "go to" for concierge athlete support, alias Kamikaze Chipmunk. Our boat was called "Come On", and the Captain's name was "Downtown Lenny Brown". We had an observer, Chris and a kayaker, Louis. We boarded the boat and motored up the East River to a place called "Mill Rock", and that's where we started the swim.

The water temperature was 16°C. Conditions were great, it was nice and flat at the beginning of the swim. The sun was out, it wasn't cloudy – it was just good conditions. I jumped in the water at 09:30 and off we went. The water wasn't too cold, it wasn't too dirty – didn't see any dead bodies, there were no dead rats, it was actually quite a clean river. Obviously some dirty bits along the way, but I didn't bump into anything much – one time I bumped into a glass bottle, but that's about it! It was a pretty uneventful swim going up the East River, but then when we came around the corner to the Hudson, the temperature of the water suddenly increased and it was hot on the surface, but underneath it was cold. That is, my belly was cold, but my back warm - which could have been the sun, but there were two distinct water temperatures or layers in the water, which was surprising.

It was nice swimming down the Hudson, it's very iconic and because I breathe on both sides when swimming, I got to see a great bit of Manhattan Island on both sides of the River.

Later on coming towards Battery Park - that's when there was a bit of chop and swell and swirls and it was mixed up water. Just before getting to Battery Park, I felt a tweak in my left shoulder and I knew it was injured, so I was just cautious. My race was bigger than the 28 mile swim and this was only one third of the project. I could have gone for it and sped up but I needed to not only finish, but finish and be able to continue. I think for the most part of the swim I was playing cat and mouse with two or three swimmers. They were leading, I was leading, and that's the way we went for the duration of the swim.

Getting around Battery Park, that's when I ran into a few problems. I'm not sure if we were running too tight, close to the edge of Manhattan Island... I think that

we were because the chop was gnarly. I think that we probably should have been further out, but I didn't have a say in that, my kayaker was leading me with specific instructions from the NYPD river patrol.

There were two points where I had some big problems and we had a police escort. I think they saw there was going to be a potential problem because they came in - and that was that I got sucked into one of the piers literally within 2m of it. I was fighting and sprinting to get out of that. Then also for a bridge, one of the piers there I was getting sucked into that and I had to swim hell for leather so I didn't hit it - so that was quite interesting too. That was some hard swimming I had to do in both of those situations.

I had to stop for a ferry to go out and going past the heli-pad - I didn't know there was a heli-pad there, but I heard the noise and I actually stopped when the third helicopter flew in to see what it was and realized there was a helicopter just above my head.

I got to the last bridge and then you swim to Mill Rock for the finish. I came in, I was comfortable, though my shoulders were a little sore and yeah, I was happy. A truly iconic swim internationally known and I join a group of elite marathon swimmers (821) who have successfully completed the course.

Ride Report

Day 1: I started the ride on Sunday 2nd June, at around about 10:30/11am, cycling through Manhattan and eventually got through the Bronx and out past Manhattan Island. In towards Connecticut, cycling through Mamaroneck I had an accident with a hit and run driver - who took me out. I was basically going straight and the driver decided to cut in on me and turn right. I landed on my hip and arm, bruised but I had to repair the gears on my bike then carried on cycling and eventually had to stop at Southport Beach. The reason why we had to stop there was because there was a storm with lightning so basically had a beachside view but with heaps of lightning all around. Craig was driving the crew car a Land Rover Discovery, which we slept in for the duration of the bike and run. With the lightning and the accident that I had, all of the stopping and starting with traffic lights, I only covered 50miles on that first day

Day 2:

Next day, roughly did 100miles and we ended up staying in Connecticut in Walmart, safe haven car park.

Day 3:

The third day we spent, we slept in Boston in a side street. A pretty uneventful ride, but it was nice. Providence was a horrible place. Biggest difference noticed riding through the states was when you switched over from Rhode Island into Massachusetts, the roads in Massachusetts, the roads were so much better.

Day 4:

From Boston we went up to Concord, past Concord, and stopped in Henniker, NH. We had to stop there because of the rain, another storm and that was a bad ride. That one was where we had a bicycle route and when I got there, the route was closed. I had got all the way down to find that the bridge was blocked off due to construction and had to turn around and that's why I ended up in Henniker. I went off route trying to find a way round, because the bridge was closed and that's why we ended up in Henniker, so it wasn't originally planned. We

originally planned to go along another road further up north, as per the google maps bike route.

Day 5:

The last day - that's where we were trying to catch up and did 147 miles. Again I had problems on the bicycle route, it was so wet that I couldn't get my bike through the bike trails because there was no traction in the back wheel through the mud, so I had to turn round and find another route. So that caused a delay and made the distance longer. Because of all the diversions I got way off route but eventually made it into Albany at 5am. I booked a hotel room for rest up and a chance to have my first shower in five days. We had a sleep in the hotel as soon as we got there - I slept for 2hrs woke up and suddenly thought "I've got to get on my bike!" but then realized it was ok, I'd finished the bike ride, so I tried to get another hours sleep out. So I'd basically slept about 3 hrs in more than 2 days.

The run started from the Martin Luther King statue at Lincoln Park, Albany. An interesting run through the ghetto area, but with very little sleep in the previous 36 hours, I soon tired after 15 miles and had to get some catch up sleep at Coeymans.

Day 2 covered 26 miles to German town after passing through Catskill.

Day 3 a solid 30 miles to Poughkeepsie and met up with the NYOW 8 Bridges swimmers on day 3 of their staged 120 mile swim down the Hudson.

Day 4, 15 miles to Fishkill.

Day 5, 26 miles to Montrose.

Day 6, 36 miles to Times Square

This was a difficult run to do and not because it was technical, it should have been a simple 145 miles. It wasn't, it was 145 miles of unforgiving tarmac and for 80% of it there was no sidewalk. Most of it was running on the road shoulder, which at times was small or non-existent and this made it dangerous with some of the drivers on the road. It was safer to run at night wearing lights with less traffic on the road. At times there was some grass tracks to run but with tick season it meant I always had to check my legs. Still affected by the bike accident and a sore hip I got shins splints on my right leg most likely because I was favouring this leg, due to the left hip being sore. Two of the days were badly effected by major rain and lightening hence the lower mileage. On the last day I ran into a problem while going through Yonkers in the ghetto area, I was a stranger passing through some big housing blocks and as I came through, the locals came out and it was more than a dozen of them. As the last day I was aiming for a big push and as I had been going for 11 days straight, I'll admit I didn't have the gas in me to escape. Just my luck, NYPD just happened to pass through and the hostile youths stepped back. The Police asked what I was doing and so I told my story, they were happy to give me an escort out of there. Making my way to Broadway bridge only to find it closed for construction work and yet another deviation to cross the Hudson before the final stretch along the Hudson River Greenway. After a 36 mile day at midnight I reached Time Square. Job done despite taking longer than I anticipated; 11.5 days for a difficult course and I can only wish good luck to anyone else prepared to take up this challenge, be safe.