



THE 2010 COOLANGATTA GOLD

"We will go to the moon. We will go to the moon and do other things, not because they are easy but because they are hard." – John F. Kennedy, Jr.

In March 2010 seven Long Reef members woke up having just experienced a bad dream. That dream was to complete the toughest iron man race in Australia – the Coolangatta Gold.

A 46.65km course consisting of a 23km surf ski paddle, a 3.5km swim, a 5.5 km board paddle and a 14.65km beach run makes up one of the most gruelling events on the planet which was first held in 1984, the same year as the filming of the Coolangatta Gold movie.

A couple of months after the first dream the plans were rolling along and in July two teams from Long Reef SLSC were formed with a gun athlete joining us from Swansea Belmont SLSC. Sam Djodan, a self motivated ski paddler joined the Long Reef Grommets team consisting of Jonah Beard (swim), James Cockerill (board) and Andrew Selosse (run). A second team called the Long Reef Young Guns was also made up of Doug Lucas (ski), Emma Jeffcoat (swim), Josh Ferris (board) and Matt Brown (run).

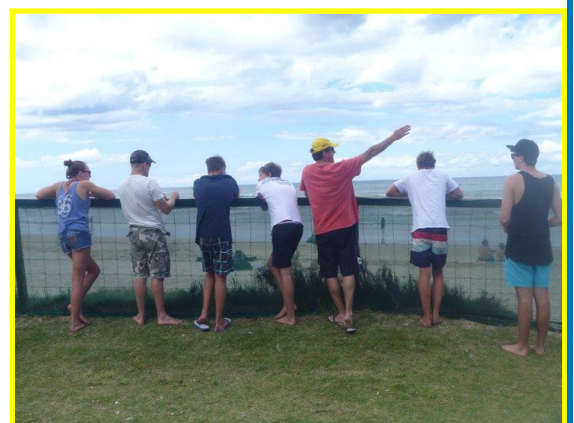
"Tough times don't last but tough people do." – A.C. Green

The toughness of the race did not worry these eight competitors, some as young as 15 years old who set about the tough task of training for the event right throughout winter. Much of the training involved hitting the pool or the surf on some of the coldest and miserable winter mornings.

The cold winter months soon rolled away and with some adversity behind them it was now time for the dream to be put into reality.

On Friday 5th November the team flew into the Gold Coast and after attending the pre race welcome dinner having fuelled up on pasta and other carbohydrates the team were left feeling truly motivated after hearing several speeches from sponsors and other VIP's.

Saturday was spent touring the course so that the competitors would know where to go and so that the handlers and support team also knew where to go. The team also learnt about the forecast of a strong South Easterly wind which would make the ski paddle the next day a lot harder than it otherwise would have been.



After a very early night the team rose at 5am and hit Kurrawa Beach ready for the start of the race. The first leg would see Sam and Doug test themselves in a challenging 1.5m swell before racing North from Kurrawa to Northcliffe (near Surfers Paradise) then heading back into a Southerly chop all the way down the Gold Coast coastline to the NSW/ QLD border at Greenmount Beach (Tweed Heads & Coolangatta SLSC). After seriously under estimating himself before the paddle, Doug put in a lightening effort and made the beach in just 2 hours and 11 minutes before tagging Emma who was waiting 650m further down the beach ready to do a 3.5km ocean swim. Sam also put in a blistering effort and for part of the race Sam was leading in the U19's category but upon arriving into the beach after 2 hours and 13 minutes a battered and blistered Sam complete with salt encrusted on his face was in second place less

than 3 minutes behind a strong Currumbin SLSC Team.

Andrew then did his first run to Jonah who was waiting down the beach next to Emma ready to do the swim. Like something on cue from a horror movie Jonah's goggles then snapped upon being tagged and with no time to replace them Jonah had to endure a tough salt water swim with no goggles.



Sam on his way to Coolangatta with Surfers Paradise in the background.

With Emma and Jonah now into the swim leg it was time for the support team to pack up and drive to Bilinga SLSC where the swimmers would arrive at. Throughout the swim both Jonah and Emma kept their place in their respective categories. Doug who was on a ski in front of Emma recalls that she was constantly putting on big spurts to keep on the tail of other swimmers as well as being stung by an unknown stinger whilst in the water. An almost blinded Jonah with stinging eyes came into Bilinga Beach just 57minutes after setting off from Coolangatta having kept his position and being just four minutes behind the still first placed Currumbin team. Having known she had done her team well with a time of exactly 1 hour Emma then came in with a big grin on her face. Both Jonah and Emma now tagged Andrew and Matt who ran 4km from Bilinga beach to Currumbin beach to tag James and Josh who would await.



"It hurts up to a point and then it doesn't get any worse." - Ann Trason

Upon being tagged, James and Josh set out from Currumbin SLSC in windy and choppy conditions around two headlands before landing at Burleigh Heads beach. Amid low hovering television choppers and a large crowd that had gathered, every paddler arriving into Burleigh looked... well stuffed. Upon rounding the heads on their easily distinguishable boards James and Josh were no exception, looking very fatigued which shows that they each put in a phenomenal 110% effort into a leg that was not easy. In true style James managed to catch a 'party wave' into the beach with Josh also catching a nice wave in before tagging Andrew and Matt who's task it was to finish the race by running from Burleigh heads along the long stretch of sand up to Northcliffe before returning to Broadbeach. There was now a total distance of 10km left in the race before the team could say they had finished the Coolangatta Gold.



"Your toughness is made up of equal parts persistence and experience. You don't so much outrun your opponents as outlast and outsmart them, and the toughest opponent of all is the one inside your head." - Joe Henderson



Where Matt and Andrew have to run to in order to finish.

After Josh and James managed to down a whole bottle of Powerade each, the support team then raced back to the finish line at Broadbeach (Kurrawa SLSC). During the run Andrew managed to catch up some more time in the U19's category and Matt also managed to make up approximately eight places in the final run! Before coming into the finish line all the runners had to pass it and run another two km up the beach to Northcliffe. The runners described this as a very demoralizing feeling.



Four hours and fifty seven minutes after first starting the race, Andrew ran into the finish line bringing the Long Reef Grommets in fourth place in the U19 mens category behind two very strong Currumbin SLSC teams who had a home town advantage and a Mooloolaba team which featured true ironman blood with the likes of Grant Kenny's son in it.

With a time of five hours and six minutes Matt ran the Long Reef Young Guns home into 19th place in the Open Teams category.

After months of dreaming, blood, sweat and tears both teams could now say they were Coolangatta Gold Iron-men and women!



Both teams went extremely well – as well as coming 4th in their division the Grommets placed 41st overall with the Young Guns placing 51st overall out of a total of 177 possible places!

“Can we please do this again next year?” – Emma Jeffcoat after the race



The Long Reef Grommets:

- Sam Djodan
- Jonah Beard
- James Cockerill
- Andrew Sellose

The Long Reef Young Guns:

- Doug Lucas
- Emma Jeffcoat
- Josh Ferris
- Matt Brown

The Support Team:

- Nick Warby
- Tony Djodan
- Sue Jeffcoat
- Pete Sellose
- Doug Ferris
- Sue and Rob Cockerill
- Sandy and Hunter Beard