

LOMBOK 2007 TRIATHLON

Race Report – Sebastian Calle

*** from a triathlon blog

Hi,

I don't usually write race reports, but as this was an inaugural event I thought I might just follow Alan's steps and come up with one.

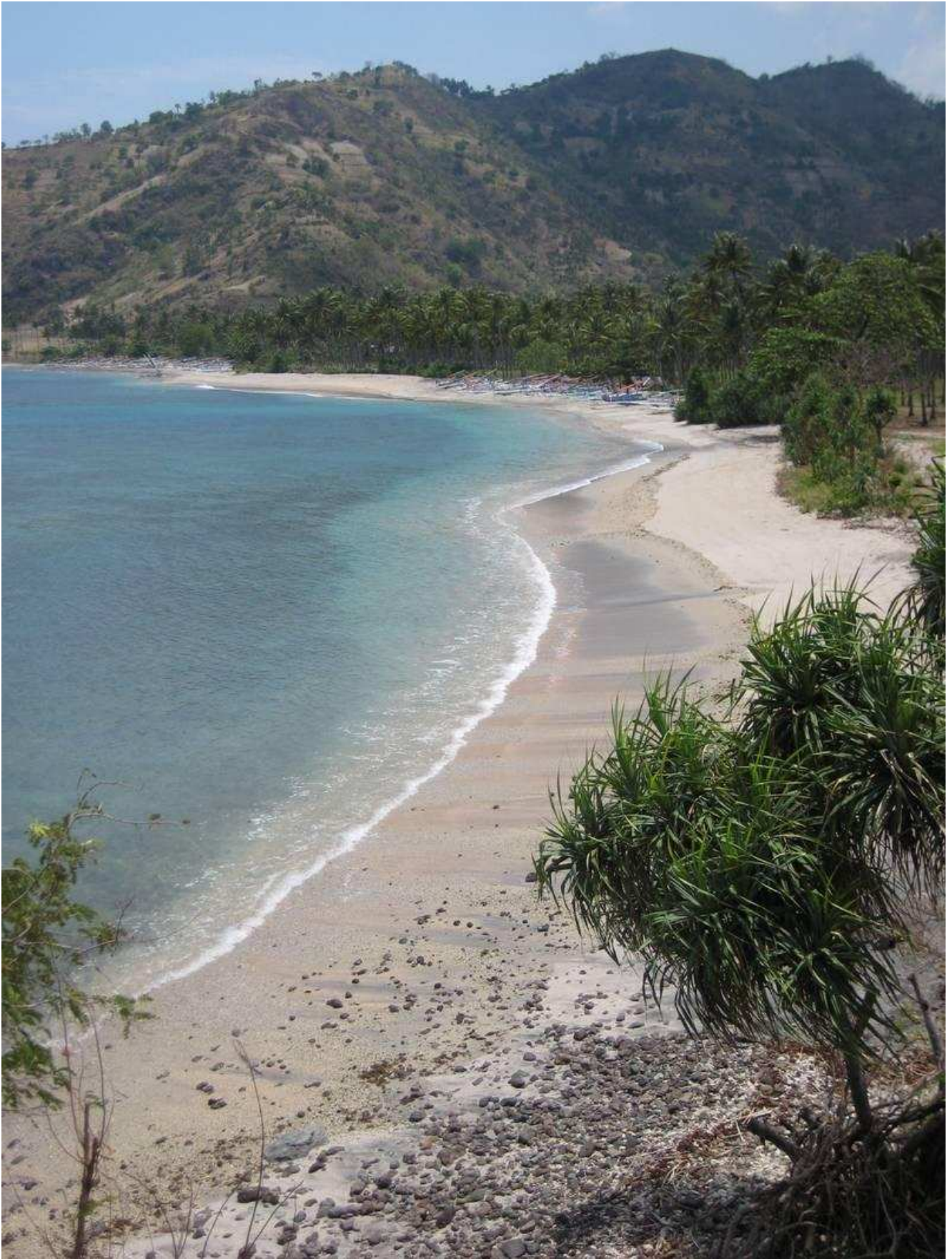
A word on the venue first. The Sheraton Senggigi is very good quality for its price (it's actually cheaper than Bintan and much better in my opinion). The swimming pool is great, with a lot of shade and even a 50m section for those who would miss doing their laps. The transition area is set up near the entrance of the hotel, within very short walking distance from the rooms, which is quite convenient.

Now onto the race:

As expected, it is a pretty small field (around 70 competitors - already more than 20 DNS from the start list - these guys may have forgotten to look at the course profile when they registered and realized at the last minute what they were up to ;-)), but still quite competitive with FOP guys like Assad, Rob and Dirk.

The swim course was changed at the last minute due to very low tide; even if it is the "toughest in Asia", you don't really want to swim/crawl/run on sharp corals.... It was supposed to be two laps out and back. The buoy at the turning point looked very very far away, but we were told that it was a measured 450m from the shore... more on that later. Off we go at 7:15, the water is clear and calm (except a bit of swell farther away from the shore), but there are some little stinger bugs in the water that are quite irritating. I stay in Assad's feet for a while, then Dirk overtakes us and Assad goes with him. Another swimmer passes me before the turning buoy, but I manage to find my rhythm and stay within 50m from the lead pack. This buoy never seems to come and when I finally get there I look at my stopwatch and see 17:xx! That is more 1k than 450m!! On the way back, you don't see anything because of the facing sun and I am a bit worried to get off-course or bump against an oncoming swimmer. I can only see the arms of the 3 lead swimmers in front and I rely on them to direct myself (not too sure how they got their direction though). I stay within the same distance from them all the way back and exit the water 30-40" behind them. Not too surprisingly, we are told that we have to do one lap only (we would have ended up doing something like 4k otherwise!). Looong run (400-500m) to the transition and I catch one of the front swimmers in the process.

Onto the bike, with some little hills to warm up. After a few k's, I see Dirk on the side of the road, obviously having a puncture, so now there is only Assad in front. The first 25k of the bike are fantastic, the road is extremely scenic, with a mix of rolling sections and very steep hills (somewhat similar to what you can find in the top section of Fraser's Hill) where your speed goes single digit. A lot of cheering and amazed looks from the villagers. Below is what you can see from the road, truly amazing:





I ride rather conservatively uphill (don't want to fry my legs) and downhill (don't want to crash - especially you don't know what to expect on the next corner, be it wildlife, sand on the road, etc.). In the first town I am a bit caught in traffic (police do their best to control but still it's Indonesia...) and I get caught by "monster rider" Dirk. I stay behind him (not drafting of course ;-) for a while, and then overtake him when the road starts to climb again, as I know he will catch me very easily on the descent. This is a steady 5k climb (somewhat similar to the first section of Fraser's Hill) in the forest. Dirk stays really close (he's really strong - he weights 25kg more than me!). Sometimes I can hear the siren of the lead car, which is a good motivation. Then starts the long descent, I am really surprised not to see Dirk overtaking me; I learnt later that he had another flat (take note: NEVER use super light tubulars in a race!). The traffic is a bit of a nuisance in the descent, I am stuck several times behind minibuses. The descent is not extremely technical, but there are some sharp corners and you have to be a bit careful (Assad crashed there - nothing major luckily). After the descent, there is a flattish section where I am expecting some strong headwinds, but it is only a very light breeze if anything, so I manage to hold a steady 37-38kph. The legs are feeling good, but I do not want to get carried away so still keep my pace on the safe side. The last section to the hotel is undulating, with a bit of traffic as well.

Longish transition as I wanted to put socks (I had some blisters from last week's NIE "biathlon"), and off onto the run. I hear that Assad is 2'30" in front (actually it was 3'30"). I know that it will be tough to catch him as usually we have similar run splits. The run course is great, two laps with a 400m steady climb (you hit it twice both ways), 100m to run on the dry sand of the beach (that is a killer) and even a couple of small fences to jump above (only 30cm high, but at this point of the race it has a nice effect on your hamstrings!). The course is well marshaled with plenty of drink stations handling water, isotonic and cold sponges (very welcome as it is getting really hot out there - Langkawi style). The legs still feel good and at the turnaround into the second lap I can see Assad less than 1' in front. From that point onwards, it becomes hard racing, both of us picking up the pace. I come as close as 30" (that is less than 150m), but on the last climb Assad takes off and I am unable to follow, and eventually have to drop the pace a bit. The finish line at the hotel is very welcome after these hard efforts and there is really a big crowd cheering.

This race is truly great (I am not saying that because Mike the race director is in this diffusion list), very well organized and in a fantastic location. I would definitely recommend it. The only issue is the traffic at some points of the bike leg, and this will need to be taken care of in future, especially if there is a bigger field.

Train safe,

Seb

