

Collins Finishes as First American in Seoul ITU

Seoul, South Korea
Sunday, May 25, 2008



A top tier of athletes from around the globe showed up to race in Seoul's first ITU Continental Cup race. After swimming and biking with the lead pack, Ben Collins ran strong to hold off the chase pack and finish as the first American athlete.

After a 27-month intensive and costly cleanup, the Han River was surprisingly clean for an urban waterway and perfect for a race venue. The square swim course had lane lanes connecting the buoys, which made for a great deal of turmoil in the aggressively swum race. The initial pace spread out the field into distinct groups, but the leaders proved

unable to maintain the speed and a group of about 12 athletes, with Collins among them, consolidated into a strong lead pack which entered the 6 lap bike course together.

The cycling leg of the race was full of sharp turns and was almost entirely flat which meant for a very fast course. After having crashed only days ago, Collins was riding a brand new Blink TT bike frame from Beyond Fabrications for the first time and had an easy time staying with the group. The spring cycling races the Collins raced seemed to pay off, he rode strong and was able to conserve energy through the corners. Despite a strong attempt by the Australians to make a breakaway, the 12 athletes in the lead pack stayed together for the entire 40 kilometers, finishing the middle leg of the race in just over 52 minutes.

Collins, having only weeks ago collapsed within meters of the finish line due to heat stroke in the Mazatlan PATCO Triathlon Pan American, started the 10k run in Seoul conservatively. Each of the four laps was faster than previous, however, and Collins finished strong in 13th overall, holding off the 2008 Collegiate National Champion, Steve Sexton for the title of 1st American Finisher..

This race is Ben Collins' best ITU finish, and reaffirms that he is capable of competing with some of the world's best athletes in the draft legal Olympic-style triathlon format. Collins commented on the trip, "the Korean people are extremely polite and considerate, and it was a pleasure to race in such a well organized competition." After the race, Ben was able to thank the Mayor of Seoul, O-se-hoon, directly by joining him for a swim in the Han River while dozens of journalists and photographers crowded around the scene.

Next up for Ben Collins is the Accenture Escape from Alcatraz Triathlon on June 8 in San Francisco, California. For the most recent information, check out <http://bencollins.org> for results, his training blog, and 2008 race schedule.