SPORTING MATTERS

RY PETER JACK

YOU may recall a few weeks ago the story of the Sheffield half marathon, which was cancelled by the organisers, as 5000 athletes stood on the start line because apparently there was a lack of water on the course for the thirsty runners.

and to announce, through an extremely bad PA system, that the race was not to proceed.

the race was not to proceed.

Of course many runners never heard the announcement and somebody on the start nne moved and approximately 3000 of the 5000 plouses As the hapless, luck-less organiser was besieged by a merciless press, demanding to know why there was no water, she just broke down and cried tears of frustration and grief and humiliaand grief and humilia-tion. I thought, there but by the Grace of God, go I...

This weekend sees one of the Triangle

iriatnion Clubs biggest events of the year – the Roe Valley Sprint Race. This con-sists of a 750 metre swim, a 20K bike and a 5K run. Triathlon Clubs

Sounds simple? A bunch of blokes turn bunch of blokes turn up, have a wee swim then have a quiet ride on country roads then a wee stroll up to the Country Park and back from the Leisure Centre. That shouldn't need all that much organisation, should it? That should be a That should be a

the that should be a piece of cake really...
The reality is somewhat different. The planning for the 2014 race started in May 2013 when we had a debrief of the last debrief after last year's race to look back at what we did well and what we back at what we did well and what we could do better. As a race organiser, you are ultimately responsible for the safety and wellbeing of 300 people who are all taking part strenuous lous activity. Race

The organisers felt the faint hearted they had no option but Later this week there to make an apology will be many occasions when I ask myself, why on earth did I get involved in this in the

first place?
As I look back through the mists of time, I see I took part in the first triathlon in 1981 in Ballymoney and the TTC was formed shortly after that. As a newly the property of the place of formed shortly after that. As a newly formed club, we need-ed to show the world that we existed so we decided to organise a pool based race in Coleraine which was then our sole head-quarters. We obtained quarters. We obtained sponsorship from the Nationwide and I somehow got away with organising an event which included bikes hurtling through busy streets packed with traffic and Saturday shoppers. Saturday shoppers. Eventually sanity prevailed and we decided to look elsewhere for a safer arena. The best pool based event is from a Leisure Centre on the outselvite of a on the outskirts of a on the outskirts of a town. The best option on the planet in my opinion is the Joey Dunlop Leisure Centre in Ballymoney as the Centre is right on the outskirts of town, on a quiet on the outskirts of town on a quiet straight country road. However, the Leisure Centre in Limavady is also ideal because (a) it's fairly close to the country and (b) the staff and management have absolutely bought into the event 100 perinto the event 100 percent and could not be

cent and could not be more helpful. So how do you organise a safe and enjoyable event that caters for first timers and also the elite? I'm very mindful of the fact that many people careers with our race

How (NOT) to organize a race than trying to get one corporate sponsor, I prefer working with local sponsors, all of whom I have contributed a fifth to the in Limavady. It is an

in Limavady. It is an honour and a privilege that they trust us with their event fee – and their safety. By the time the race is over I will have filled several files with papers and documents and permits and p necessary race informa-

tion.

Here is the top 20 list of things to do when organising a race:

1. Plan ahead. If your race is in May, lodge your application, which has to be completed on the Triathlon Ireland form incide a tight 20. Form, inside a tight 20 day time frame the pre-vious October.

2. Complete the Event Management & Safety Plan. This is a 36 page document which would test the patience of a Saint. You have to of a Saint. You have to give all the details of the event from cradle to grave, from womb to tomb etc. This includes the time and place of registration, the start time of every heat, how licences are checked, it must also include a man must also include a map of the transition area, diagrams of the swim entry and exit, the cyclists' entry and exit and the runners entry and exit and both transitions and the finish sitions and the finish line and when may they retrieve their bikes and where they can get a massage and where they can get grub etc. i.e. it's fairly comprehensive! 3. Get sponsors. The entry fee is £35. Believe it or not for the last two

it or not for the last two it or not for the last two years (although the event has been running for 20) we have lost money. That is probably due to the generosity of the race organiser in relation to the contents relation to the contents of the goody bag. In the past this has included the new CD from Paddy Nash and the Happy Enchiladas. This year as Paddy's album is not out yet we have instead a...secret! But I think it is going to knock the is going to knock the socks off our lucky

triathlons etc. I was the first to use him. This wonderful computer chip on everyone's ankle gives us their swim time, their transition time, their transition time, their overall time and their position. overall sum. This year I am pleased to be able to work with Gabriel Devlin Motors, time and their position Xperience Software, Hunters Bakery, Marshall Howe's Fruit in their age group. I mind the time when all Marshall Howe's Fruit Shop and Altec Solar. These people were super keen to be involved and really get a kick out of the fact that

mind the time when all of this had to be done manually...

8. Book a DJ for sounds and also for use of a microphone (as the MC tends to be a bit mouthy on it). I have got Pete Vamos the man himself, so we are we are in good hands.

9. Get other clubs involved. This year the event is brought to you courtesy of the following clubs: Limavady in the control of the country of the following clubs: Limavady in the control of the country of the following clubs: Limavady in the control of the country of the following clubs: Limavady in the country of the country o we have a top class event here on their own doorstep.
4. Design a t-shirt. I 4. Design a t-shirt. I sit down every spring and try and come up with a killer logo. Last year, I put it out to the club and Julian Grimes ing clubs: Limavady Amateur Swimming ing clubs: Limavady
Amateur Swimming
Club (who count 30
lengths for each swimmer), the Roe Valley
Cycling Club for the
20K bike course; the
Springwell Running
Club for the run course contributed "swim bike contributed "swim blike run sleep repeat" for the back of the shirt. I'm happy with this year's logo – but will 300 athletes and 50 marshalls be equally happy? It really makes are craited when I'm happy? It really makes me smile when I'm doing an event somewhere and I see an athlete wearing a t-shirt that I toiled and sweated over in the design process. When I get a design, I send it up to my good friend Marc Desmond of Partridge Peartree, who gets his designer to give my rough outlook a professional finish so that it doesn't look like a dog's dinner. This year I made about ten amend-Club for the run course obviously; the Millennium Volunteers for registration officials; the Rotary Club (Service Above Self is their Motto after all) and obviously the host club TTC. This is where Mervan Kelly where Mervyn Kelly, Brian Scullion, Tommy Moore and Katherine Woods come into their

dinner. This year I made about ten amend-ments as I have five

a hedge. As Elvis Costello once famously sang, "Accidents will happen, they are only hit and run..."

hit and run..."
Thankfully the athlete recovered. Hopefully, this year the Red Cross

6. Liaise with the PSNI. We are so fortunate that: (a) The Police do a superb job for us each and every year marshalling busy roundabouts and junctions We heave to me.

tions. We have to pro-vide our own marshals of course, but car driv-

of course, but car drivers intend to pay more attention when they see a uniform... (b) We are not charged for it (yet). As and when the PSNI charge us for their women and man hours, the price of a triathlor in this country will dou ble.
7. Book the timing system, Glenn Grant organises this. He is a former school teacher

works full

who now

can sit and drink tea all day undisturbed.

Woods come into their own.

10. Talk very nicely to Mary McCloskey of St Mary's to have access to the St Mary's pitch for a few hours. We used to have the finish and the whole fulcrum of the event at the Leisure Centre but now it's just too big. We ments as I have five sponsors to please, plus six clubs who are help-ing us out as all eleven logos will be adorning our shirt.

5. Get safety cover.
Again another form the it's just too big. We need a bigger and safer transition area

5. Get safety cover. Again another form, the Red Cross are great and help us every year. Two years ago they were needed as a cyclist man-aged to bike off a per-fectly straight road into a hedge. As Elvis Costello nore famously. 11. Organize extra ar parks in Rossmar chool and Limavady college and near the 3G

Pitch.

12. Get the bike racks and Finish Line Paraphernalia from Triathlon Ireland i.e. drive to Donegal and back.

13. Fill in a Notice of

Intention to organise a Public Procession Application form (I kid you not). I have to answer questions such

as how many bands will be on the traditional route, where the bands will meet and where they will disperse...

swim, bike, run, transi-tion set up and take down and course set up. If they all do their work I just have to sit there, look pretty and drink tea all day...

have finished the race.

16. Speak nicely to Jim and Kitty Loughery of the Roe Mill Road who not only marshal on the run course but hand out approximately nand our approximately 600 cups of water and tell great white lies as "you are looking great" etc. If only the race organisers in Sheffield had access to Jim and Kitty!

17. Book the Mayor and a special guest who this year will be James Thompson to hand over the prizes.

18. Three weeks

14. Appoint course directors for the six vital areas of the race. These are registration, swim, bike, run, transi-

15. Organize physio -Joanne Donaghy of Sports Injury Clinic does a great job for aching muscles and she tends to the wounded and afflicted after they have finished the response for the sport finished the response finished the response for the sport finished the sport fini

before the race sit down with a bottle of gin, a packet of valium, and a whole bucket load of midnight oil and throw 300 names in the air and



The weather this Saturday will be very different! 19229KDR.

get them each into ten heats off 30, each based either on their gender or estimated swim time or age.

19. Two weeks before the race sit down with an even bigger bottle of gin and work out what swimmer goes in what lane, because woe betide the race direcbetide the race direc-tor if he puts a swim-mer into a lane where the other five swim-mers are slower than him and impede his progress!

20. Pray for good weather on race day.
The TTC can organise
most things but the
climate on race day cannot even be organ-ised by Triathlon ised

Ireland! Oh and as extra 21st tip, after the race is over and the course dismantled and the prizes given out and the 17 thank you letters have been sent and the TTC trailer safely loaded and parked away you sit down to organise a date for next year's Roe Valley Sprint Race and you have a debrief
but this year, the
debrief will have to wait for a wee while as I am driving to Galway immediately after our race to go and commentate for 10 hours at a half Ironman the next day – now where did I leave that packet of valium...



The indispensable lane counters from Limavady Amateus Swimming Club. 19458KDR.



The Roe Valley Sprint Triathlon takes place this weekend and the final sponsors are all now in place, included are lan Kane from xperience, Peter Jack and John Peart from the Roe Valley Leisure Centre and Gagriel Devlin of G D Motors. 21089KDR



Some of the hardworking Limavady Millennium volunteers, who are in charge of registration. 19041KDR. time providing timing chips for marathons,