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Chrissie takes Ironman Championship title again, while Rachel rejoices at fourth place

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Chrissie Wellington at the 2009 World Championships

Alumna Chrissie Wellington won the 2011 Ford Ironman World Championship title on Saturday, October 8, deservedly earning the crown for the fourth time in five years.

The win was made even more remarkable considering that just two weeks before the race the University of Birmingham 1998 Geography graduate crashed going round a corner in her last long bike ride whilst preparing in Kona, Hawaii. The crash, caused by a flat tyre, resulted in a bruised hip and elbow, a torn pectoral muscle and a severe road rash.

Despite the painful injuries, the 34-year old finished the gruelling race around Kona – which consists of a 2.4-mile swim, 112-mile bike, and a 26.2-mile run - in a staggering 8 hours, 55 minutes and 8 seconds. The result was all the sweeter after having to pull out of the 2010 event due illness.

Chrissie wasn't the only University of Birmingham Sport (UBSport) alumni to compete in the event, as she was joined by 2000 Law and Politics graduate Rachel Joyce.

The 32 year-old, who was a swimming club member with Chrissie while at University, completed the course in an impressive 9 hours, 6 minutes and 57 seconds to take fourth place, behind 2010 Champion Australian Mirinda Carfrae and fellow Brit Leadna Cave in second and third place respectively.

Speaking to University of Birmingham Sport after the event Chrissie said: 'I am overjoyed with the victory and to have three British girls in the top four – including two University of Birmingham alumni – is the icing on the cake!

'It was the hardest race I have ever done, both mentally and physically. I had to dig incredibly deep and left my heart and soul out on that race course, but it was a wonderful result and Rachel had a phenomenal race too, I am so happy for her.

'I crossed the finish line totally spent and overwhelmed, but also so incredibly happy to have regained the crown and to have shown that anything is possible.'

Chrissie added, 'I can't wait to come back to the UK, and to Birmingham, for some serious celebrating!'

Rachel, who took 11 minutes and four seconds off her 2010 time, said: 'I am pleased with my place, although I have a tinge of disappointment that I couldn't hold my run together to fight for a podium spot. I still find it incredible that Chrissie and I have ended up doing what we are doing after swimming together on the University of Birmingham Swim team!'

She continued, 'My swim was maybe a little below my best, but my exiting in water with Leanda was good. We spent much of the bike ride pushing each other on, and at times I would push the pace thinking I had dropped Leanda, but then she would cycle past me which was great motivation. It also meant we created a bit of a gap on the women behind us.

'Given that I only moved to fourth position in my last 300m, I am happy with the result, but getting to so close to a podium spot has definitely fired me up for next year!'

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