

IM 70.3 Bangsaen, Thailand, 2024 - Race report by Faith Suzuki



Here's a bit of a race report from the past weekend!

Would 100% recommend this one, despite it being so early in the season for us in Japan.

Pre + Swim 70.3

Bangsaen round two!

After a long 4-year hiatus, 2024 was the third edition of this middle distance triathlon, and my first time to return to the same triathlon.

I had had a great time in early 2020 right before the pandemic, and despite the somewhat late notice for registration, I decided to pencil it in as my season opener.

I love Thailand and have spent an inordinate amount of time here since I also used to live in Malaysia and Singapore for over 13 years.

As far as the trip in general, I purposely went early on Tuesday to better acclimate from the single digit temperatures in Japan, and I think that helped tremendously.

I also hit the sauna after the pool and trained with the heat and humidifier on the indoor bike activities in the 2-3 weeks leading up to Thailand.

Also, I rarely used the AC in my hotel room and instead, had them bring a fan.

Somewhat unrelated but I was asked about this a lot - I use a different chain for the race. I rode around a bit in Bangsaen before the race and my usual chain collected a lot of sand and gritty debris so I was *extra* glad to have a separate chain. I do a quick drivetrain cleaning before I put on the "race chain". It could save you 12 watts and I promise you won't regret it.

Anyways...the swim is choppy, especially for a South-east Asia race - it is relentlessly choppy no matter where you are on the course.

I did not fare well in 2020 and I would not do much better in 2024 - I improved my time by less than 40 seconds from a high 39 to a low 39 -_-

It's murky, you obviously cannot wear a wetsuit, and there ain't much to write home about but it's an easy triangular swim.

Add 2,000 athletes, a few random punches and kicks, and really, I was just glad it was over.

T1 was very long from bike rack to bike out, and since I was not racked with my age group, I really had no idea where I was.

But I also knew that if the swim was rough for me, it was probably the same or worse for other women.

I knew the bib numbers for my age group, and I was fairly confident that I could find some women on the bike and run.

Bike

This was a slightly different bike course with less elevation from 2020.

The winds were not as strong this time and overall, it was probably one of the easiest bike courses I've rode in a race.

Considering the low IF and w/kg I pushed though, I wonder if I should have smashed it harder.

At the same time, I was aware that I haven't quite optimized my bike fitting recently with the new cockpit, and the heat+humidity of Thailand presented a formidable challenge coming from middle of winter in Japan.

On top of that, after a poor bottle hand off led me to lose control of the bike and wipe out at around 36km, I think I subconsciously opted to ride conservatively.

Looking at my data, I didn't lose much time after sliding across the asphalt, picking up my bottles, putting my chain back on twice, and readjusting the front wheel as it was rubbing on the brakes.

My aerobar pads were bloody, I was covered in dirt, and every little bump on the road made me wince, but my bike was surprisingly ok. Aesthetically, it's not great, but I think it'll hold up.

Had I not crashed, I believe I could have cracked sub 2:40 but today was not the day and in hindsight, I feel very lucky to have been able to continue.

At the time, I was unsure if running off adrenaline might be a poor choice but I think I fairly (ok, perhaps optimistically) assessed the situation and I am very proud to have rallied to eventually find the finish line.

Compared to the 2:57 in 2020, I am happy with the 2:43 - but apples and oranges since it was a different bike course.

Ultimately, I failed to communicate to the volunteer holding out the water bottle that I "choose you" (I usually point to the volunteer so s/he knows to expect me).

He was not looking at me and when I grabbed the bottle at about 28kph he did not let go of the bottle in time, my arm whipped back, and I lost control of the bike for what felt like eternity as I attempted to stay upright, knowing I probably wouldn't be able to but also trying to fly into the grassy bit on the side of the road. Fortunately, I got away with bruises, road rash, and ripping my brand new kit.

It sucks the volunteers at that last tent were distracted and not paying attention (I did shout HEY but I don't think they heard me), but I don't fault them, shit happens.

Run

The run is typically my time to shine, and I was pleased with how my legs felt coming off the bike.

Well ok, the first few km felt weird and I knew I was running too fast but my legs weren't yet in the groove, so I just kept shuffling along.

The run has several short but punchy climbs, it also rotates wildly between cool + shaded or sizzling + no shade.

The aid stations are absolutely clutch - ice cold mini water bottles and sponges, Cola, cups of ice, weird sports drink that tasted like red bull but isn't red bull, etc. Even ice cream! Just a whole smorgasbord.

Compared to the 1:51 in 2020, I am happy with the 1:44 I ran. I did well with my fueling - no cramps and managed to keep hauling ass.

It wasn't my best run off the bike, but considering the variables at play (heat, humidity, hills), I think I did alright.

I managed the fastest run split amongst the 22 women in my age group, but there were some really fast women out there #goals

Random Thoughts

Overall, I improved from a 5:34 in 2020 to a 5:13 in 2024. For my first race of the season and in such a different climate, I can't complain.

I am in awe of another triathlete - the women's champion - whom I remember from 2020. She finished in 5:03 in 2020, and pulled out a 4:39 this year. Amazing!

I am still looking for sub-5 and believe it will come eventually.

I have several years of experience in race logistics and organization from the small local road races to the Olympics, so I tend to have a critical eye for race management.

70.3 Bangsaen sets the bar incredibly high - most organizers would quite frankly, be unable to reach the level of hospitality, standards, and general *completeness* that Thailand Tri League achieve.

I don't know how they could make a profit from this event, but assume they must somehow.

For 330 USD, you get a backpack, three meals, two shirts, a medal, a closed bike course, post-race massage, excellent aid stations, and free Sportograf race photos (I've done 8 IM brand now and this is the only one that gives you free photos).

Fueling

Pre/Swim: about 800mg sodium, 40g carbs

Bike: about 3,500mg sodium, 270g carbs

Run: probably about 1,500mg sodium, 120g carbs

Costs

Flight: Thai Airways (HND/BKK) about 80,000 JPY

Stay: The Sea Bangsaen - about 1 mile from venue, easy walk on beach boardwalk - about 35,000 JPY for 7 nights

Race Entry: 300 USD (Tier 1 - plus \$30 for the Active fees)

Transportation: 60 USD RT using IM service or about 70 USD RT taking a cab depending on your bargaining skills (about 60-90 minutes between Bangkok/Bangsaen)

Food: IM provides buffet + two food truck tickets for dinner on Saturday before the race, Sunday after the race (two food truck tickets), and again later at the awards/roll down (fancy hotel buffet). Lots of food options around the beach.

My first time at 70.3 Bangsaen in 2020 was a good time, so 2024 was a no-brainer for me.

That said, I am undecided on a 3rd time. 70.3 Oman looks interesting.