



## ZWIFT “NORSEMAN Festival of Climbing race”

Saturday 1st August was supposed to be the day that the real-life extreme triathlon event “The Norseman” ran in Norway. Due to Covid-19, the event was cancelled this year, so Norseman partnered with Zwift to run a virtual Festival of Climbing instead.

**What is The Norseman?** It’s a point-to-point race. The distances of the real-life event in Norway are equivalent to those of an Ironman race with the 1900 m swim starting from the loading bay of a car ferry, in 10 degrees water of Hardangerfjord fjord. Competitors transition onto their bikes and then cycle 180 km through the mountains, the first 40 km of which is uphill (reaching 1200 m above sea level). They then run 42.2 km of which the first 25 km are flat and following this they end up climbing the local mountain, Gaustatoppen, 1,880 m above sea level.

The Zwift race consisted of cycling only, and numerous Zwift preparation sessions have led up to the race. As in real-life, if you finished you get a black jersey.

You are also automatically qualified to be part of the draw for two places at Norseman 2021, in Norway. The slogan for the event is "The Norseman: this is not for you". Enticing, right?!. Check out the organiser's website here: <https://nxtri.com>

### THE ZWIFT RACE ROUTE

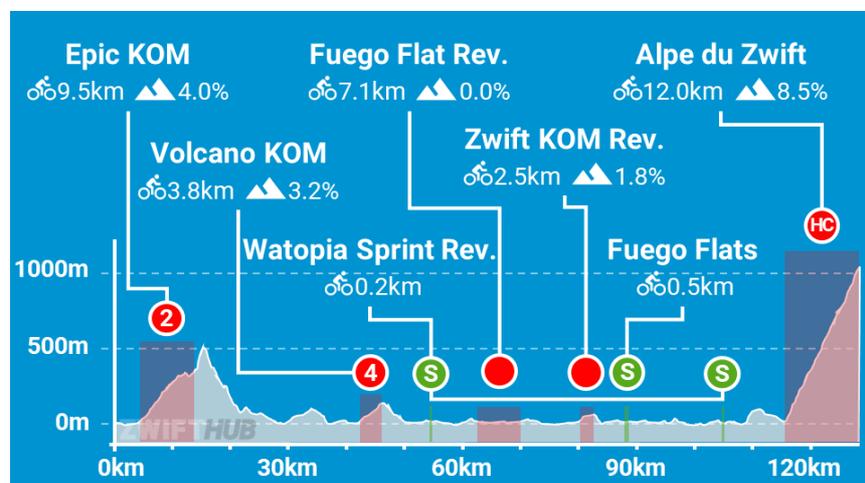
**Length:** 128.3 km (79.7 miles)

**Elevation:** 2335 m (7,661')

**Lead-In:** 0.5 km (0.3 miles)

**Map:** Watopia

**More info:** <https://zwiftinsider.com/route/the-uber-pretzel/>



## HOW THE RACE UNFOLDED

221 riders started the race, the 7th of 8 race slots of the day. It was a controlled, but fast start, with some riders forming a front group of 300w+ 4-5 w/kg from the gun.

1 rider broke away from the lead group before the 1st big climb up the EPIC KOM, so fast that people were asking for him to be disqualified, and some even questioning if he was a 'bot'. He came 7th in the end and despite the disbelief, his profile justified his power numbers, with a clear history of ultra events. This just shows that the calibre on Zwift comes from real-life as well as just 'Zwifters'. People should expect this level of excellence. (Well done to that man, Sebastien Truchi.)

The lead group were strong and soon they moved away, leaving some of us between them and the chase group, with 3-4 minutes of time either side. The only sensible thing was to drop the power and wait for the chase group to catch up. This turned out to be a good choice. The group were friendly, motivated and controlled. The 7 of us might as well have been a time trial team, with a mix of Americans, French, Dutch, New Zealanders, Australians. For the next 60+ km, everyone took their turn at the front.

At one point, a chap called Sulawesi Santos from Indonesia needed a bathroom stop. He told the group, and powered ahead to put some time down so he could rejoin the group. We all dropped the power to let him do it, congratulating him on laying down 5+ w/kg for a few miles, to allow us to keep momentum.

A rider called Rachel Lieberman needed some sugar before the Alpe, again, the group dropped speed to allow her to rejoin. She came in 13<sup>th</sup> and fastest woman.

The point to make here is that being in a group is better than riding Watopia alone in most situations. Yes, a few more places may have been gained individually for the stronger riders, but in endurance events it counts to help each other - and they will pay you back when you need it most.

Just to note: Last year the Norseman organisers chose to turn drafting off on the Zwift races, but changed that this year. A good move for the camaraderie, but it would certainly be interesting to see what the race would look like with no drafting. Not that doing so would add any joy whatsoever of course.

The race was long and the group discipline paid off, with the Top 10 riders gaining a 10-15 minute lead on the rest of the field. Alpe Du Zwift soon put paid to that though, decimating the group by Turn 20.

**“Any climb at the end of a 128km race is horrible and the Alpe was a shocker as always.”**

Any climb at the end of a 128km race is horrible and the Alpe was a shocker as always. Given that the real-life event throws a mountain marathon at the end of it, it was no surprise the organisers chose to do this.

By Turn 10, the lead 10 riders were moving at about 3-3.5 w/kg. Leaders like Sebastien and Sulawesi (above) suffered or came into their own. The flats had gone and the climbing was >

challenging. Sulawesi put 10-15 minutes on our group by the end, finishing in 4th. Not to be sniffed at, at the end of a race like that, even for an A+ rider.

The course took its toll at this point. The skin pads on the soles of the feet were starting to bruise, and blood flow was playing up. In the end, unclipping and standing on-the-shoe instead of in-the-shoe helped a little (albeit a balancing challenge). The time reflected this, 58 min versus a PR of 40 minutes. But after 4 hours of solid group efforts, what mattered more was that we all helped each other to the end where we could.

**In conclusion.** Overall, this was one of the toughest sessions experienced for some time. Yes of course, the real-life event is so much harder and extreme (there is literally no argument on this) but the organisers pulled off a great event on Zwift all the same. Albeit "TYPE 2" fun.

As in real life, finishers get the Norseman Black Jersey, and a few friends to accompany that. Who knows, there may be some real-life reunions in Norway next year...

<https://nxtri.com/2020/07/02/norseman-festival-of-climbing/>

#festivalofclimbing



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## RACE STATS

**Number of finishers:** 54

**FCCC final position:** 8th (ZwiftPower) // 9th (Zwift)

**Time:** 4h 18m

**Brutal score:** 8/10

**Do it again?** Ask again tomorrow.

**Overall series** (from all 8 races): 548 finished. 2000+ started.

**Attrition rate:** 75%

**Fastest woman rider:** 4h 06m

**Fastest male rider:** 3h 39m