

Newbie Tri-athlete Corner

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Tips

So your training is done and the event is here, now what? You may have run a road race before and had to organize the proper clothes, running shoes, timing chip and bib, but a triathlon involves a lot more planning. Here are some tips to make your day a little less stressful:

The Day Before the Race

*At the expo/packet pickup, you will be given a swim cap, a number to attach to your bike, a running bib, and a timing chip.

*It is helpful to lay out the items you will use for each sport before packing them in the bag you will take to transition.

*Perform a bike check to make sure the tires are filled and ready, and have extra tubes, air and tools on hand for emergencies.

*It is imperative to know the course you'll be on. For example, will you be swimming in a pool, lake or ocean? If you will be in open water, you may need a wetsuit depending on the water temperature.

* Always train with your race outfit beforehand to make sure it works the day of the race.

Race Morning

*Arrive early and get body marked with your race number.

*Wear clothes that you can compete all three events in comfortably, as there is no changing area in transition. Tri-shorts and a race singlet can be worn during all events, or you can wear a swimsuit and then add shorts for the bike and run.

*Never forget to put your timing chip on.

*Have water bottles filled and on the bike as well as any supplements you plan to use.

*Transition areas can be very tight, so plan to lay your towel with your shoes, hat, race belt, glasses and necessary items in the order you will put them on.

*After setting up your transition area, get familiar with the ins and outs. Find out where you will run in from the swim, and if necessary, count the racks to know exactly where your bike rack will be. When the transition area is filled with people, you may not see your bike, but knowing which rack is yours will make the process quicker and more efficient. Do the same for the bike out-and-in and the final run out.

*If possible, get in the water and warm up. Know the direction you will swim and where the turn around is. During the swim there will be safety kayaks and boaters that you can hold on to if needed, but not to make forward motion with.

Guidelines

There are a few rules of a triathlon that you should be familiar with before racing in order to avoid a time penalty or even a disqualification:

*Always walk your bike in the transition area and make sure to mount and dismount in designated areas.

*Make sure your helmet is on your head and fastened until your bike is racked.

*While biking, remember to be safe and aware of traffic on roads, keep three bike lengths between you and other riders, and stay single file on the right side of the road.

*When passing, announce loudly that you are "passing on your left," then complete your pass within 15 seconds.

*Finally, headphones are prohibited on the bike and run for safety.

*For complete USAT rules go to <http://www.usatriathlon.org>

Nutrition

In order to be at your peak fitness level during training, it is necessary to fuel your body with not only nutritious food, but the proper amount of food as well. Often times, tri-athletes who are just starting out will either not supplement their diet with enough food to steadily improve, or they will eat food that causes either increased tiredness or the breakdown of muscle protein.

Obviously, during the rigorous training of a triathlon, your body will be burning a significantly higher amount of calories than before, (when you were either sedentary or working at a much lower level of training), and therefore the calories you consume must increase.

If you were already a healthy eater, then this diet plan will seem like a walk in the park; if not, it may take some getting used to. For the body to operate at a high level of fitness, it needs carbohydrates, protein and fat—in the correct amounts, of course. You want to make sure that the foods you choose are nutrient-dense and full of the good stuff, a.k.a. vitamins, minerals and fiber.

Fats: To get your daily dosage of healthy fats, bypass the butter, cookies and fast food, and instead opt for healthy fats, such as olive oil, almonds, seeds, and avocados.

Carbs: For your carbohydrates, focus on filling your plate with plenty of fruits, vegetables and whole-wheat grains to supplement your energy. White bread lovers will soon find that whole-grains fill you up faster and keep you satisfied longer.

Protein: For protein, stick with the lean meats, such as chicken or fish, or even lean beef, and supplement those with eggs, milk, beans, tofu and low-fat cheeses, such as parmesan or low-fat cheddar.

Fluids: Finally, perhaps the most important part of your diet is to significantly increase the fluids that you consume. If you ever feel thirsty, you are already dehydrated. Don't let yourself get to that point!

When you begin this dietary plan, it is necessary that you learn when to eat so that you can benefit the most from the selection of foods. You may be thinking this just means not to eat a big meal ten minutes before your workout, but in fact, the timing of food consumption is directly related to your athletic performance. For peak performance, you want your carbohydrates to be available for energy and for your proteins to be standing strong to help your body recover more quickly.

Before Training:

1. Consume a great amount of fluid (16 ounces +)
2. Eat a high-carb, low-fat meal.
3. Give yourself time to digest

The best example of this would be a turkey/low fat cheese sandwich with plenty of lettuce, tomatoes and mustard. Ignore the mayonnaise; it will only weigh you down. For those training at a high intensity level, include a side of whole wheat pasta, cous-cous or quinoa with grilled vegetables.

During Training:

1. Eat foods that won't create a stomach disturbance with your activities
2. Eat to gain energy, not to feel full.

Bring along an energy drink that is packed with electrolytes and sodium to replenish the fluids your body has sweated out. Additionally, bring energy bars or bananas to supplement your hunger. If you are working out less than an hour, omit the energy drink and instead guzzle plain water. The sugar and calorie content of energy drinks are way too high for a half-hour workout.

After Training:

1. Eat a carbohydrate immediately after.
2. Be sure to wait at least an hour or two before consuming your next meal, so your body will be able to absorb the nutrients properly. Again, eat a high carbohydrate, low-fat meal after your workout.

Now is the time to consume lean meats, plenty of whole grain pasta, vegetables and fruits. Drink plenty of water.

For more information, consult a sports nutritionist to have them create a daily dietary plan that is suitable for your sex, weight and training intensity.

FAQ's

Equipment questions:

What bike should I ride?

A road bike is a good entry level bike, but if you plan on doing a lot of racing or long distance riding, a tri-bike is better.

Should I buy a new bike even though I have one now?

If it's your first race and your bike is in good condition, use it. You will know after the race whether or not your bike served you well enough to compete in another event, or if you need to purchase another.

Do I need a wetsuit?

You only need a wetsuit if the lake or open water is under 70-ish degrees. Most tri-athletes actually prefer the wet suit for the buoyancy factor, regardless of the temperature.

How do you transition from one sport's outfit to another?

If it's a short distance, you will generally wear one outfit since there is not changing area. A one piece tri-suit, or tri shorts* and sports bra, work perfect for the swim and then you can just throw on a shirt for the bike and run.

*Tri shorts are similar to bike shorts, only with a very small amount of padding.

Food**What should I eat race morning?**

Whatever you eat during training, you should eat the day of the race. Always make sure that you do not try new foods on race day, as you don't want to end up with an upset stomach in the middle of your swim! Good standbys are always oatmeal, bagels, and bananas, or other easily tolerated foods.

Are there any foods that are completely taboo during race season?

You want to eat the healthy carbs and protein foods that you have been training with the whole season. Also, you probably don't want high fiber on race morning, or any obvious no-no's such as fatty or sugary foods.

Training**How do I qualify?**

Ironman requires an AG win in an Ironman distance qualifying event to go to Kona, but the shorter distances don't require qualifying. Just sign up!

Do I need a trainer?

It depends on how much money you want to spend and how serious you are about racing. Generally you can get a lot of good free information on various web sites for beginners. If you find yourself lacking in motivation or not steadily improving though, a trainer can always help improve your performance.

How much should I train?

Usually 6 days a week, with the duration of workouts varying with the length of race.

If I already feel strong in one area (such as swimming), do I need to focus on it as much during training?

You should always do all three disciplines, but if you have a weakness, do concentrate on it a little more.

Race Day Questions

How much should I eat during the race?

Sprint races should only require pre-race food, but for Olympic races two hours and up, gels and electrolyte replacement drinks are highly recommended. Long distance competitions of six hours and over will require a lot more calories to replace what you will quickly use. Drinks filled with protein and carbs, supplemented with the food that you normally train with are perfect solutions.

Does everyone start at the same time on race day?

Larger events may have Time Trial or wave starts based on age, but Ironman distance competitions will be a mass start.

Will there be someone to help me if I cramp up in the water?

Yes, there will be swim course lifeguards in boats to assist you. As long as you don't use them for forward motion you may stop and hang on till you feel better.

Are there any etiquette rules I should know when on the course?

Please never litter on the course and when biking warn the person you are passing by stating, "Passing on the left."

What food/drink/supplements are you allowed to consume when on the course?

Anything you want as long as it's not alcohol☺

Susan's Blog

Our resident newbie who is training
for her first triathlon, gives you a glimpse into her world...

Entry 1

When I was asked to participate in a blog about new tri-athletes, I thought it would be not only a great opportunity to keep in shape, but a great way to keep me motivated. I've ran in a few races here and there, but I've never participated in a triathlon. I know that training for this event is going to be challenging on many levels, but I'm excited!

As I start training for this triathlon, I know that I already have two obstacles that will affect my training, namely my knee and my hamstring, which I injured last winter skiing. Although my knee is healing well, my hamstring isn't doing as well as I'd hoped. But you can bet I'm not about to let that get in my way!

Time is another big issue for anyone training for a triathlon. Everyone's life is busy, but mine seems to be out of control lately! I have a full-time job and I'm currently in my last semester of graduate school. A lot of my free time is focused on homework and assigned reading, and in addition to that, I'm looking for a house to move into by July. Whew! What I have left of my day is spent with my boyfriend, friends, and family. Yet, believe it or not, that is why I wanted to get started in this triathlon.

Because my life is so hectic right now, exercise is the only thing that keeps me sane and, yes I admit it, pleasant. Exercising helps me to manage my stress and keep me in a good mood for my busy schedule.

Since this is my first triathlon, my goals aren't that lofty. My main goal for the sprint triathlon is just to finish strong! I don't know how fast I'll be next to the other competitors, and I just want to do my best. If I do this, I'll be very proud of myself, even if I finish last.

Current Training Schedule

I usually run one to two and a half miles or swim around two-three days a week. I am a strong swimmer and on good days, I can swim for an hour. The past two weeks though, my leg has been bothering me so I decided to rest for a few days or so.

As of Friday, my leg felt ok, so I went for a 45 minute walk on Saturday. On Sunday morning, I felt much better and my leg didn't hurt at all, so I went for a 45 minutes swim. I've been told to start taking a spin class to get in shape for the biking portion of the triathlon, but I don't have the time right now because of my rigorous class schedule. I will continue to focus on my running and swimming though, and can't wait to see how I do in biking!

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Swim Planned	45 min	XXXX	60 min	XXXX	XXXX	60 min	XXXX
Swim Actual							
Run Planned	XXXX	2 miles	XXXX	XXXX	2.5 miles	XXXX	2.5 miles
Run Actual							