



48

WAYS TO NAIL THE

**IRONMAN
MARATHON**

You just swam 3.8km, Then cycled 180km. Wondering how you're then going to smash out a decent marathon time? Fear not. Here to help you are some of triathlon's fastest long-distance runners ▶

BOOST YOUR BIKE STRENGTH

If you want to complete the 42.2km Ironman marathon comfortably, then start with your bike strength. Coach and 39-time Ironman finisher Mark Kleanthous explains how to get the most out of your training

1 If you want to 'compete' at the Ironman, run 60mins max effort after your most important long ride. Do this 2-3 times a month during the final 12 weeks.

2 If you want to 'complete' the Ironman, run 4-5 times a fortnight off the bike for 15mins, starting 20 weeks before Ironman day. Never run further than 45mins after cycling.

3 Know the total amount of climbing for your chosen Ironman bike. Start training with a similar cumulative elevation gain for each 10 miles, then progress to similar gradients in the final 16 weeks.

4 Learn to endure long steady rides of 4-5 hours before turning them into an Ironman effort in the final 12 weeks, during the race-specific phase of your preparation.

5 Improve your performance by completing a maximum of two long runs a month and never run further than 2.5hrs in the final 16 weeks.

6 Boost your endurance gains by consistently riding 75-85 miles two to four times a month, rather than shorter and much longer rides.

7 As soon as you can, work out how much solid food you can absorb during your bike-to-run workouts without gastric issues. Reduce the solid amount by 15% on race day.

8 Practise cycling at iron effort for up to one hour after swimming, at least twice a month, and wait 5mins after starting your bike before consuming fluids, then switch to solids after 25mins.



JOHN COWPLAND

9 Worried about the swim or bike cut-off? If you can, hire a multisport coach to improve your swimming and cycling techniques. And don't run a marathon in the eight months before your Ironman race.

10 Train at Ironman effort on the actual race course or as close to the same profile as you can find. And, if you can, climb the same amount every 10miles to get your legs used to the effort.

FUEL EVERY KILOMETRE

A successful Iron marathon requires a well-practised nutrition plan and some forward thinking. Over to sports scientist Andy Blow

16 Pace the bike ride sensibly. This will allow you to eat and drink plenty before the run starts, and to get off the bike in good shape leading to a much better run than if you're already blown up.

17 Start eating little and often on the run (gels, blocks or other easily digestible carbs every couple of KMs) – don't wait until you start to feel low or hungry to begin eating as it'll be too late.

18 Walk a few strides through all the aid stations, even early on and if you're feeling good. This allows you to properly consume food and drink without spilling and gulping down loads of air.

19 Take salty foods from the aid stations – if the salt tastes good, eat more of it or take some salt capsules as it's a sign your body is craving sodium and it will help you maintain better hydration levels.

20 Sip on flat Coke if you start to flag or feel like your blood sugars are dropping. The liquid sugar hits your bloodstream very quickly and can dig you out of a hole if you're starting to bonk. ▶

COVER ALL EVENTUALITIES

As with most things in life, planning is key when undertaking an Ironman. Multiple long-distance race winner David McNamee shares his secrets to smashing all 42.2km

11 Cut your toenails before the race – not the night before though as you don't want to deal with any nicks on race day. This will just make for a more comfortable marathon run.

12 Race in whatever's comfy for you. If that means a change of clothes in T2 then go for it. You're going to be out there for several hours – chafing is not welcome! Also, consider nipple plasters!

13 Stick to your pre-race plan, especially early on in the run. And don't get competitive trying to race others. The Ironman marathon has to be very individual.

14 Find out which nutrition brand and specific bars/gels etc. are going to be on offer during your Ironman run and practise using them in training. Your gut will need to adapt, so start two months prior.

15 Make sure you know where the aid stations are pre-race so you can factor in any stops, when you will take on nutrition and any extras you might need to carry with you. This will really help with your pacing plan as well, see p44.



“It’s tempting to go out fast from T₂, but that’s the most common and costly mistake”

PACE IT TO RACE IT

Key to mastering the marathon is a good pacing plan to help you tick off the km’s and reach the finish line in top shape. Pro Caroline Livesey has the tips

21 To effectively manage your Ironman run pacing you first have to know what your run pace should be. Key brick sessions during training will allow you to dial this in.

22 Typically, as you step off the bike, you’ll feel a bit of elation. The temptation is always to go out fast, but that’s the most common and most costly mistake. Stick to the plan!

23 Think of the first half marathon as preparation for the second half. Your pace plan should allow for some ‘gaining’ of time in the first half and ‘loss’ in the second.

24 Think about the demands of the course/weather in advance and factor them into your pace plan, e.g a particularly hot section or an uphill like at IMUK. Inject small variations into your plan to deal with these.

25 The pace plan must factor in aid station time. You have to fuel correctly to make it through so don’t skimp on nutrition by trying to stick to pace and charging through. Factor them in.

PREP FOR THE HEAT

Many an Ironman takes place during the hottest months of the year, but here to keep you cool under pressure is sports scientist Andy Blow

WAGNER/ARAUJO

FOCUS ON MENTAL STRENGTH

Running an iron marathon not only takes huge amounts of physical endurance but also plenty of mental strength. Kona pro Rachel Joyce shares her advice for staying tough throughout

26 Practise mental cues in training, such as holding your run form and technique, counting or positive talk. If you've used these in hard sessions they'll be more effective in the race.

27 You might find repeating a favourite poem, song or a mantra works for you, to help keep you centred. Again try it in your hard sessions so you know what works and what doesn't.

28 You won't feel great for the whole of the run, that's a guarantee. But, if you're prepared for that, it's easier to ride out the rough patches if you can tell yourself you'll feel better.

29 Have answers ready for the negative doubts that will most likely pop into your head at some point. Remember how you felt terrible in a training session but stuck to it and nailed it.

30

Think about how you will break the marathon down into manageable chunks. Trust me: thinking of 26.2 miles isn't a good tactic. You can practise breaking distance down during your long run in training.

31 Simulate the environment you'll be racing in, both heat and humidity, as closely as possible. This makes sure you get the most specific adaptations to the conditions.

32 Do the simulation in the last 14 days before you go to the race – adaptations from heat acclimation come and go quickly so there's little point when the race is a long way off.

33 Wear extra clothing when training in cooler conditions if you don't have access to hot weather. Your body will respond to this almost as effectively as it would if you train in heat.

34 Hydrate properly and make sure this includes plenty of sodium in the fluids you're drinking, as sweat and electrolyte loss in the heat can be very significant. As always, practise in training.

35 Be safe – hyperthermia can be very dangerous if you over do the heat stress, so never push your heat acclimation training or do it on your own. Take a buddy! ▶

MAINTAIN YOUR TECHNIQUE

When the pressure's on your technique can be the first thing to fail. Here to help you stay strong is IM Lanzarote winner and cover star Lucy Charles

36 Take on the hills. I complete a hill reps session almost every week. It builds strength and teaches you to run with good form uphill. Regardless of whether the run course is flat or has a few lumps, this session works a treat.

37 Don't neglect the speed work. Yes you're running a marathon but speed work is still essential. Running at speed teaches you to run more on your toes and with better form. This session combined with a weekly long run is a winning combination.

38 The more tired you get during training or racing the more important it becomes to focus on good form, especially during training. If you can produce good form even when you're tired it will become cemented in your muscle memory.

39 Have technique cues to check your run form as you fatigue. For example, check for loose hands not crossing over, head up, lift your feet, straight back.



COMPETITIVE IMAGE/PAUL PHILLIPS

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Stay relaxed. I often tense up through my shoulders when I'm forcing the run too much, but if you can stay relaxed everything just flows so much better.

GET THE RIGHT RUN KIT

You could be on the run for up to 7hrs, so consider the following gear to help you go from T2 to the finish line as quickly and comfortably as possible. If you're racing in the heat, also see p34



41 RUN SHOES

Hoka have exploded in popularity for Ironman, offering comfort, forward propulsion and a light weight during the 42.2km marathon run.



42 RACE BELT

A belt with pockets will allow you to carry your own personal supplies, like salt capsules and gels.



43 CALF GUARDS

Compressive calf guards can kick-start the recovery process on the run by increasing oxygenation to the muscles and reducing toxins.

44 TRI-SUIT

A two-piece suit will help with Portaloo visits. The Compressport here also offers compressive benefits and plenty of venting.



45 SOCKS

It'll slow your T2 time slightly but a quick change of socks pre-run will provide a comfort and mental boost, as well as reducing the chance of blisters.

46 ANTI-FRICTION CREAM

If you have time, a swift coating of cream will help prevent blisters and soothe any hot spots developed during the 180km bike leg.



48 VISOR

A quick-drying, breathable and light visor will reduce the sun's glare as well as mopping up sweat. Just ensure it fits correctly. [220](#)



47 WATCH

Whether you're aiming to beat the cut-off or setting a PB, pacing is key on the Ironman run. So track your time and distance with a run watch.

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