TRI CLINIC

Transitions » Velodromes » Swim technique » Ironman nutrition

MEET OUR EXPERTS

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SEND US YOUR QUESTIONS...

If you have a triathlon query, send us your question and we'll try to answer it in the next available issue of ***220 Triathlon.*** Include as much relevant information as you can. Sadly, we cannot reply to your questions personally.

■ **Email your question to:**
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■ **Or send it to:**
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It takes time and patience to perfect your transition, so take it one step at a time when practising

STRADDLE THE SADDLE

Q I'm looking for marginal gains this year as I was pretty happy with my times in 2014... I just need to make my transitions more speedy! Can you explain how to mount/dismount with the shoes attached to my bike? Is it a case of practice, practice, practice?
ANDREA CLEELOW, EMAIL

A It definitely takes practice but knowing what to practice will make perfecting a seamless switch between running and riding easier.

The first thing to do is clip your shoes to the pedals and tie two thin elastic bands through the heel loops. Spin the pedals until the driveside shoe is at 3 o'clock and the other is at 9 o'clock, then stretch the band on the driveside shoe around the front mech and the non-driveside shoe's band around around the rear brake or quick-release. Provided the bands are thin enough, they'll snap as soon as you start pedalling. Now you can start running with your bike, which for most people feels more natural on the non-driveside, so let's assume that's what you'll be doing.

Start slowly and use your right hand to hold the saddle and guide the bike as you run. When it comes to mounting, grab the handlebar with both hands then push off with your left foot as you swing your right leg over the back wheel and onto the saddle. You're not really jumping onto your bike, it's more like hurdling onto it; the only difference is that instead of being in front of you and stationary, this hurdle is beside you and moving.

The momentum from your right leg should carry you into place and, even though you're not jumping, aim to 'land' so that your inner thigh is against the saddle. From there, slide into place and start pedalling. Once you've got some clear space, reach down to get one foot into its shoe and then the other - while keeping your eyes on the road, of course.

Now for the dismount: as you approach T2, get your feet out of the shoes when it's safe to do so and slow down to a comfortable running speed. If you're dismounting to the non-driveside, bring the driveside pedal up to 12 o'clock and shift your weight so you're standing on the non-driveside pedal. When you're within about 5m of the dismount line, swing your right leg around over the rear wheel, then you can bring it through between the bike and your left leg.

Once your right leg passes your left leg, step off the pedal so you land on your right foot and begin running immediately. Bringing your right leg through lets you hit the ground in a running position rather than with your right leg overlapping behind your left.

You should be on foot as you reach the dismount line and when you are, let go of the bars and continue running while holding the saddle. Remember: your shoes are no longer banded so you may need to hold it further away to avoid them clouting your shins. **RB**

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Q I'm currently training for my next sprint-distance tri and I attend a weekly, hour-long session at a velodrome. I try to maintain an even pace throughout, but my pulse and respiration rates are raised and I can feel the effort for the rest of the day. Any advice on making this hour-long session more tri-specific? THOMAS KELLY, GLASGOW

A Riding at a moderate and fairly even intensity will benefit your bike fitness no end – but you could use your time on the track to boost it more. You can't do hill intervals and you can't use gears to increase the resistance, but there are certainly sessions you can do to mix your riding up some more.

First, you could simply use your track time for riding tempo (based on your description, it might be that you're already doing this). Essentially, this means that after a 10min warm-up you should ride at a medium intensity for about 40mins, before cooling down for 10mins. Tempo intensity is higher than the steady aerobic level that you could maintain comfortably all day while doing a long ride on the road, but not so high that you start gasping for breath straight away. If you've not done it before, start with 20mins of tempo and build up the time gradually.

I'd be more inclined, though, to use the session for interval training, particularly as your events draw nearer. After a thorough warm-up, gradually increase your riding intensity over a couple of mins, going slightly beyond the point where you're breathing comfortably and into the area where your breathing becomes laboured. When you start to feel it, gradually back off the intensity, again over a couple of mins, until your breathing is comfortable and controlled again. As soon as you're at that point, begin the process again.

Continue this cycle for 20mins. Increase the duration by 5mins every week until it takes up the entire hour (minus your warm-up and cool-down).

Another effective session is to ride for 4mins so that you're labouring for breath at the end of the interval. Then recover by pedalling easy for a couple of minutes before going again. Start off with three work periods on your first session and increase by one until you're at six or seven.

Finally, you can use your track time for a threshold session. After a warm-up, you're going to hold race pace for an extended period to get ready for your events. You want to ride at a challenging intensity, but one you can maintain. Start at 20mins and increase gradually week by week until you're at 40mins. This is great race preparation, but don't attempt it until you have some interval sessions behind you first.

The bottom line is that you need to push beyond your comfort zone on a regular basis to benefit from your time on the track. **MB**

IMAGE ISTOCKPHOTO.COM

NO TIME TO TRAIN

Q I'm a frontline paramedic working 50+ hours a week on a rolling rota of 12-14hr shifts. I'm a tri newbie but I have a sprint, Olympic and 70.3 this year, spread out between May and late September. I'm diligent in training but can only realistically dedicate 5hrs a week. And, I'm a weak swimmer!
CONNON HOULT, EMAIL

A With only 5hrs a week, you'll have to be clever with training and use your time efficiently.

As a weaker swimmer you need to make sure you're competent – but remember that you rarely spend over 15% of race time in the drink, so be super-efficient with pool time. Think about adding deep water running (DWR) to save changing time, or run straight after your swim. This also saves travel time and means you can include two sessions in one trip.

Your biggest time slot should be for a long bike ride as you need to get those miles in to build muscular endurance for the 70.3. Plus, it's the biggest training hit that most people can do without injury. Aim for 1.5 to 2.5hrs, with a 3.5hr ride occasionally in the last eight weeks before your 70.3. Add to this another session in the week of a 40min turbo and 20min run.

Carefully planned sessions and well thought-out prep can make a huge difference

As for the run, we've already covered DWR, running from the pool and brick runs, but you could also do an alternating long run one week of 60-90mins and a shorter run with 3 x 1mile @10km pace efforts the next.

You don't have the time for big mileage or long sessions, but you can be more efficient if you:

- Keep in Zone 1 (<80%HRmax), especially when you want a hard session but know it really should be steady. This will be rewarding but won't hammer you too much.
- Keep your training gear organised: have swim kit ready and your turbo trainer set up – with shoes on the pedals!
- Challenge yourself once a fortnight in a time trial, such as a 500m swim TT, long bike climb/flat TT, or 3-5km run, say a Parkrun.

Good luck! You're one of the heroes of our sport and can still perform to a high standard with smart and diligent training, sound nutrition and good use of well-maintained equipment. **JB**

QUICK Q&A

I often have a battle getting my wetsuit off in transition. Will baby oil work just as well as wetsuit lubricant?
DAN HODSON, EMAIL
In short, baby oil will do almost exactly the same job. However, a specific product will be designed to protect the neoprene a little better. Put plenty on your wrists, ankles and lower legs for a stress-free T1!

Do I need to take gels or energy drinks for a sprint-distance race?
CAROLINE BARRETT, EMAIL
This depends heavily on personal taste, ease of digestion and ability. Remember, for most of us a sprint-distance race is only a sprint by name and will still take well over an hour, so unless you're a Brownlee you might well need a pick-me-up to avoid bonking out!

I've only recently started running. Do I need a GPS watch?
JOHN COLES, EMAIL
GPS is certainly a very useful training tool, but you don't want to become dependent on your watch as a beginner. First and foremost you should enjoy your running and be able to zone out without constanty worrying about how far and how fast you've run. Perhaps get used to dialling into your pace naturally and achieve a target time before splashing out.

LET'S GO ROUND AGAIN

Q I've done a couple of seasons in triathlon now and the swim is my weakest discipline, although I have got over my fear of open water! One thing that really seems to slow me down, though, is the time it takes me to get round the buoys – I seem to almost stop and doggy-paddle round them. What is the best technique?
BEN CRAMPTON, EMAIL

A Open-water swimming brings a whole new challenge to both swimming and triathlon, so you've done a good job of getting over your fear of this element of the sport. But there are a number of skills required to improve your open-water performance, which include sighting, drafting, positioning at the start of a race, positioning in a pack, and yes, how you turn around the buoy(s).

Turning around a buoy itself can be relatively simple and a few different techniques can be employed. The first is simply to twist your body around the buoy as you swim. You may need to do a short doggy paddle stroke or two with the arm which is closest to the buoy, however your outside arm should be able to swim normally throughout. The advantage of this is it means little disruption to your stroke but the disadvantage is the need to be flexible to twist around the buoy.

The second technique is to roll onto your back for one stroke and then back onto your front by continuing your rotation in the same direction, a bit like a corkscrew. As you rotate, aim to turn through 90° and exit having turned around the buoy. The advantage of this technique is that the rotation can help you change direction, the disadvantage is that you leave your stomach and chest open to a hit from a misplaced swing from someone nearby.

Place yourself tactically when navigating buoys for a smoother swim

Practise both and you may find you become more confident with one over the other.

Once you're happy with these techniques you might also want to think about how you approach the race to make the turn at the buoys easier. Mass starts mean lots of swimmers are likely to be trying to get into the space around a buoy – which can make for a very uncomfortable experience. To ease this, try either starting on the outside of the group and swimming a fraction wider around the buoy, or, if you have a bit of a change of pace, try to position yourself in a group (maybe closer towards the front) before you reach the buoy. **AB**

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Keep on top of your race-day nutrition, and experiment with different options in training

This year I'm doing my first Ironman, and while I'm now more comfortable with the distances I'm a bit clueless on handling my nutrition. Please could I have some advice for the bike and run? I want to make sure I'm properly fuelled as I'm hoping for a good time.

TERRY JAMES, EMAIL

BIKE

MARK KLEANTHOUS
Is a vastly experienced triathlete and coach

A Aim for 200-600 calories per hour on the bike. If you have any special preferences/dietary requirements keep extra food in your transition bags.

Throughout the bike ride aim for 1,000mg of sodium per hour. You need to adapt your race-day strategy to the climate/conditions and what works best for you at Ironman race pace.

Mentally divide the 112-mile bike ride into 3 x 30-mile segments and the final 22-mile section then follow this strategy:

■ **0-30 miles** Drink only water for the first 15-20mins after beginning the bike section, then consume calories every 15-20mins. This first segment is about fuelling up again after the swim and preparing for the miles ahead. This should be the easiest section of the race.

■ **30-60 miles** In this segment focus on consistent calories and hydration. During the tougher terrain focus on consuming liquid calories and then switch to solids for the easier parts.

■ **60-90 miles** If you've fuelled well you shouldn't feel weak or tired. If you do then slow down and consume more. If you're feeling energised and strong, still hold back until the final 22 miles. During this segment you will need to urinate. If you don't need to then you're dehydrated and need to drink more.

■ **90-112 miles** If you're having mood swings this is likely a sign you're running low on calories. If you don't feel like eating ease back and consume more calories. Stick to liquids if you feel tired or weak. Stay focused as it's easy to forget your nutrition at this stage. Judge the final 22 miles depending on how you feel, and avoid paying too much attention to just heart rate alone as this can be misleading.

"DURING THE TOUGHER TERRAIN FOCUS ON CONSUMING LIQUID CALORIES AND THEN SWITCH TO SOLIDS FOR THE EASIER PARTS"

RUN

RIN COBB
is a clinical and sports performance dietician

A Fuelling right for the run can sometimes prove quite challenging as you will be trying to manage dwindling carb stores, taste fatigue and what you can stomach. Here are some pointers to help you go the distance:

Carbs are your priority. They are your main source of fuel, but as you'll have been on the go for many hours by this stage your reserves will be low. Aim for up to 60g of carbs per hour, but if using a mixture of glucose and fructose, 90g per hour is optimal. It's worth practising eating in training to help the gut adapt to this volume, which will also prevent tummy troubles.

A steady supply of carbs will also help to keep your blood sugars in check, thus reducing your chances of hitting 'the wall'. Those that have experienced this won't forget it in a hurry; prevention is definitely the key.

Try experimenting with real food options, as these can actually be cheaper and also meet your needs. Good foods to try are flapjacks, cereal bars, Jaffa Cakes, fruit (fresh and dried) and that old faithful, Jelly Babies! When perusing the supermarket aisles, look for total carbs per 100g rather than just calorie content, and avoid products that are high in fat and protein.

Sports drinks are a great triathlon fuelling option if you're struggling to eat enough. They help your body absorb fluid better than just water alone, plus the salt encourages you to drink more without overhydrating.

You could also try caffeine, which can reduce fatigue towards the end of a race. Timing is important as caffeine can take 45-90mins to take effect; like all aspects of your nutrition strategy, test it in training beforehand.

So in a nutshell: think carbs and practise your nutrition in training to ensure you get the most out of your programme. Bon appetit!

"A STEADY SUPPLY OF CARBS WILL HELP TO KEEP YOUR BLOOD SUGARS IN CHECK, THUS REDUCING YOUR CHANCES OF 'HITTING THE WALL'"

IMAGE REMY WHITING