

TRI CLINIC

Tubs vs clinchers » Swim strength » Cramp woes » Alcohol check

MEET OUR EXPERTS

ANDY BLOW

is a sports scientist, triathlon coach and former international triathlete



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has 20 years' coaching experience and has won 220's Coach of the Year award several times



MARK KLEANTHOUS

is a triathlon coach who has completed 37 Ironman events



↑ Bump up set lengths and hone your technique to make track time iron-specific

TRACK BENEFITS

Q Are there any benefits to doing track sessions in preparation for an Ironman? I currently do one a week, usually consisting of one-lap, two-lap or 1km efforts, but am considering switching this to a tempo run.

JO MARSHALL, EMAIL

A Many people think of the track as being just for speed work, and arguably lots of fast running is not required for an Ironman (where even top racers barely go faster than 6min/mile pace). That said, you can do some excellent, targeted Ironman training on the track by adjusting your sessions to be more specific to the demands that an Ironman will place on your body.

You can also use the track environment to develop aspects of your fitness - like technique and pace judgment - that are easier to hone in a controlled

situation than out on the roads or trails. To make your track sessions more Ironman-specific, rather than just doing fast repetitions you can do longer sets (up to 10 or 15km) at a moderate pace, with short recoveries between reps.

For example, where a typical track session might involved 5 or 6 x 1km reps at your 10km race pace with 90sec recoveries, you could do 12-15 x 1km reps at your marathon pace with only 20-30sec recoveries. This shifts the emphasis from developing short-course speed to endurance, which is more specific to your event, as well as reducing the risk of injury that can come with fast-paced running.

To use the track to help improve pace judgement, you can try running mile reps at or very close to your target Ironman pace. Ideally you want to do this either during a long run (if you can get your long run route to go past the track) or after doing a good long warm-up. Time yourself running 5-6mile reps at your target race

pace with very short recoveries between, without looking at your watch during each interval. Only time check at the end of each rep so you can adjust your pace on the next one. Focus on how running at target pace really feels (rhythm of your feet, stride pattern, breathing and so on). If you do this several times, you will become much more aware of your pacing and more likely to judge your efforts on race day accurately.

Finally, running on the track can help you to improve your form and mechanics, especially if you can get a coach to observe you and provide feedback. This is because the very flat surface allows you to run very consistently and the coach can see you multiple times during a session. Form is very important in running at any distance, because if you can develop a more efficient technique you can save energy by becoming more economical - something that can make a huge difference late on in an Ironman race. **AB**

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: triclinc@220triathlon.com

■ Or send it to: **Tri Clinic, 220 Triathlon**, Immediate Media, 9th Floor, Tower House, Fairfax Street, Bristol BS1 3BN

GO ONLINE...

For more training advice, head to www.220triathlon.com/training



Q A friend recommended I change to tubular tyres for racing, as they can be faster and just as easy to change nowadays. Am I right to be sceptical about taking his advice?

TOM ALCOCK, EMAIL

A Yes, you should be sceptical. The tubs versus clinchers debate has been raging for years, isn't likely to be resolved soon and isn't a clear-cut choice at all. The methods for taping or glueing tubs haven't really changed, are more of a palaver than clinchers and they're more expensive. Putting aside issues of cost and convenience though, even on performance alone it's six of one and half a dozen of another. Here come the tips...

■ ROLLING RESISTANCE AND AERODYNAMICS

Clincher technology has improved massively and, with optimised set-ups, there's very little to choose between the two. You can no longer state carte blanche that tubs are faster. A top-end set of clinchers, matched

aerodynamically to a wheelset and paired with latex tubes, can and have tested better.

■ HANDLING AND RIDE QUALITY

The mystical, intangible and legendary ride quality of tubs: is it so much better? Hard to say, but it's worth remembering that all of the pro peloton still chooses to ride them. Is this just tradition, rider intuition or are the teams working on hard performance data? Probably a bit of all three, but remember they have a supporting team car with mechanics and spare wheels.

■ WEIGHT

We all know that aero trumps weight but, if aerodynamics and rolling resistance are equal, weight is the next performance box to tick. Like for like, a tub wheelset will always be

lighter as the rim doesn't have to withstand the internal pressure of a tube. For example, a Zipp 808 Firecrest Tub rear wheel weighs in at 750g and the clincher equivalent is 840g. If you like seriously hilly courses, then tubs could be faster for you.

■ RACE-DAY FIXES

How quickly you can fix a flat in a race scenario is a performance factor. Tubs are less prone to pinch flats and, if you use sealant, surprisingly large penetrations will seal. Products such as Pit-Stop provide an almost instantaneous fix and ripping off a flatted tub and putting on a pre-glued spare can be quicker than replacing a tube in a clincher. That said, you'll only probably carry one spare tub - and don't forget Norman Stadler at Kona in 2005! **NC**

IMAGE JOSÉ LUIS HOURCADE

SWIM STRENGTH

Q I'm a relative novice to triathlons, and swimming is my weakest discipline. I have improved but can't seem to get my 400m time below 8mins. What should I focus on? Are there any exercises I can do outside of the pool to build up strength for swimming?
GARY BRENTON, EMAIL

A Consistency is the key to success and swimming faster takes time. You can only be consistent if you remain uninjured. Rather than building muscle and strength to get faster, I suggest a more subtle approach, developing the following areas. (For more detailed descriptions of the exercises mentioned, head online to www.220tri.com.)

■ Stability around the shoulder girdle. There are three exercises that you can do before every swim session. Performed regularly they will strengthen the rotator cuff muscles and those of the entire shoulder girdle, helping to keep the 'ball' in the 'socket' so that there's a strong stable platform from which the arms can do their work. You will need a Thera-Band to perform these: internal and external rotations at the shoulder; standing reverse fly with static hold; and rhomboid retractions.



■ Range of movement at the shoulder and hip. The next area that hinders the average triathlete is body position - the ability to maintain a streamlined position is fundamental to faster swimming. Core strength is important but I recommend starting with hip flexor tightness. A simple kneeling hip flexor stretch every day is all that's required. Add in some other upper-body stretches for the lats, pecs and the obliques/quadratus lumborum. You can do most of these in the shower after your swim.

With increased stability and better range of movement you can now focus on the core. Here is a 2min set that you can do before or after your pool workout: 1 x plank; 1 x side bridge (left); 1 x supine bridge; 1 x side bridge (right); 1 x kneeling woodchop. The first four are static holds for 30secs while the fifth is a dynamic exercise. Because these will take just 5mins before and after every pool session there's no excuse for you not to do them. Given time they will help your swimming. Just be patient. **SW**

QUICK Q&A

I only have a week to prepare for my first race. How should I tackle transitions?

BEN GRIMLEY, EMAIL

Quick tips include: ensuring your kit is organised well into S, B and R sections; having your nutrition close to hand; putting your bike shoes on and running with them to the bike mount area; using elastic laces in your run shoes to save you oodles of time in T2.

Should I use my TT bike for training as well?

BETHAN CLEWES, EMAIL

If you're going out with the intention of riding some miles without a specific effort in mind, a road bike may be more suitable. But if you have a big race lined up, check if there are descents, sharp corners, etc. You need to get used to tackling tougher terrain on your TT bike because they're generally tougher to handle.

I'm new to cycling and my backside is killing me! Will I just get used to it?

GAVIN THOMAS, EMAIL

Saddle soreness is normal during your 'breaking-in' period, but if pain persists beyond a month you could be riding the wrong saddle or it may be in the wrong position. An expert bike fitter will help solve the problem if you don't have any luck.

GRAMP WOES

Q My son is 14 and suffers from cramp during races. Someone suggested magnesium tablets and these have helped, but is there anything else he can do to prevent it? It's beginning to get him down.
ANDY COLVER, EMAIL

A Exercise-associated muscle cramping (EAMC) can be easy to solve, if you understand why it happens. Everyone is different, though, and certain individual factors increase the chances of cramp occurring: muscle fatigue, electrolyte deficiency, changes in gait, tight muscles and tightness in the surrounding area.

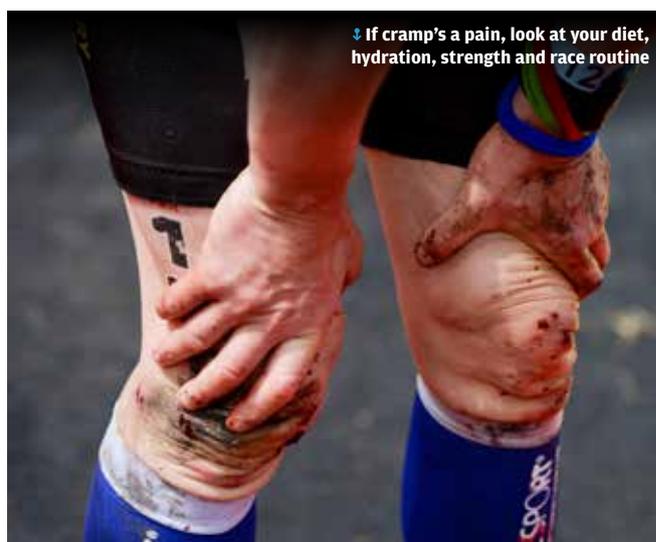
Pre-race remedies include drinking the correct amount of fluids based on your daily requirements and sweat rate (get a sweat test - knowing your sweat rate and salt loss for the duration and intensity is vital in preventing

dehydration); strengthening and stretching exercises; ingesting carbohydrate during exercise to help produce normal gait patterns when energy levels become low; and supplementation, such as magnesium (which you mention), that can restore electrolyte imbalances within 48hrs.

As your son's already taking magnesium tablets, also make sure that his diet contains plenty of naturally-occurring magnesium-rich foods, such as avocado, dark leafy greens, nuts, pumpkin seeds, fish, bananas and dark chocolate.

Athletes often experience cramp in their race rather than in their training because they don't train at their race-specific pace. Regular massage will also prevent cramp, as will compression clothing worn during training, racing and recovery.

The site of a cramp will be an area that's not able to cope with the demands placed on it at that particular time. In a triathlon, the adaption between each discipline



places great strain on the muscles, so consider the following remedies to prevent cramps reoccurring when racing:

■ Always allow plenty of time for a pre-race warm-up: 3-5mins in each discipline.

■ During the race, make sure that you're well-hydrated and increase your electrolyte intake. It's better to drink little and often than to drink a lot but infrequently.

■ Always build your pace in each discipline - don't start fast. **MK**



↑ Drink up (in moderation); beer needn't be a complete no-no

How much will going out for a few drinks once a week affect my training and performance? I don't get completely paralytic, but I do like a beer on a Saturday night!

AARON JONES, EMAIL

SPORTS SCIENCE

ANDREW HAMILTON

is a sports science expert, freelance writer and experienced triathlete



A It depends very much on how much and how often you drink. Assuming that you're not going on a bender each week, it's unlikely that three or four pints on a Saturday night will have a major impact on your general health. However, it may well affect your performance, especially if you plan to train or compete over the following days.

There are two reasons for this. Firstly, alcohol promotes fluid loss by depressing production of the hormone vasopressin. Vasopressin helps to ensure the concentration of fluids in blood and body tissues is appropriate and interference with its action leads to an increased loss of body fluid from urination, which can contribute towards dehydration. To make matters worse, alcohol-induced fluid loss can lead to the additional loss of key electrolytes like magnesium, potassium and calcium, which are

involved in nerve and muscle action during exercise.

Research has shown that two litres (3.5 pints) of medium-strength beer after exercise can lead to significant dehydration, delaying the process of recovery. However, consume weaker beers (2% or less) and the dehydration effects of alcohol become negligible.

A knock-on effect of dehydration is that muscle glycogen synthesis (which requires water to 'fix' the glycogen into the muscles) can be impaired. This is exactly what you don't want after training, when the goal is to recover and replenish your stores of muscle glycogen as rapidly as possible! And even when dehydration isn't an issue, alcohol can still interfere with the synthesis of liver glycogen, which acts as an energy reservoir, helping to smooth out energy levels during exercise.

For all these reasons, while a few drinks occasionally aren't going to harm you, it's probably better to give alcohol a complete miss during periods of heavy, daily training - and certainly in the run-up to competition.

"IT MAY WELL AFFECT YOUR PERFORMANCE, ESPECIALLY IF YOU PLAN TO TRAIN OR COMPETE OVER THE FOLLOWING DAYS"

PERFORMANCE

CONRAD STOLTZ

is a cross-triathlon specialist and four-time Xterra Triathlon World Champion



A I believe that to be successful in life you need to have a sustainable lifestyle - whether that be the sports you participate in recreationally, your job or whatever you're passionate about.

I've been racing triathlon professionally for 23 years now and I believe my longevity is largely attributed to living a healthy, balanced lifestyle without going to extremes in an attempt to better my performance. I know that ultimately it's this balance that will make me a more successful athlete in the long run, and by overdoing things I know I could burn out and my career could end prematurely.

I don't do diets or blocks of training that are unrealistically exhausting, and I take the time to pursue hobbies and interests outside of triathlon.

Although I love my training and try to eat and drink healthily most

"MY LONGEVITY IS DOWN TO LIVING A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE... I ALSO REALLY ENJOY LIFE'S SMALL PLEASURES - LIKE GOOD BEER AND WINE"

of the time, I also really enjoy the small pleasures in life - coffee and cake are my favourite treats after hard sessions, and I particularly enjoy good beer or wine.

I really have a taste for the various flavours of craft beer. I also live in Stellenbosch, the heart of the South African wine country, so I have a wide selection right under my nose. In fact, I have a beer or wine just about every day. It adds taste and variation to my diet, helps me relax after a long day and it feels like a reward for hard work. Good wine also enhances the taste of food and brings friends together!

Although alcohol may have a small detrimental effect on training and performance, this is offset by being happy and content, and not depriving myself of something that I actually really enjoy. Having said all this, going out and getting hammered all the time is probably not the best thing to do for sporting performance or life in general! Like everything in life, enjoy in moderation!