

TRIATHLON TIPS 2017



Applepiproductions

Triathlon Tips 2017 - Introduction

I've put this guide together not as a definitive answer to success, more as a suggestive set of tips I've picked up on the way. Whilst much of it is obvious, particularly to experienced triathletes, I hope there are some hints and tips that will help you improve your performance.



Pip Moore 2017

Triathlon - What is it?

Triathlon is a multi-discipline sport consisting of swimming, cycling and running. (In that order, although in its infancy, the run was first and the swim last).

Race distances can vary but typically range from a Sprint, a Standard and all the way up to Ironman.

- Sprint distances are typically 300-400m pool swim or 750m open water, 20-22km cycle and 5km run
- Standard or 'Olympic' distance is approximately double the sprint distances
- Ironman is much further. Typically a 2.4-mile (3.86 km) swim, a 112-mile (180.25 km) bicycle ride and a marathon 26.22-mile (42.20 km) run.

Swim

Estimated Swim Times.

Many events ask you to estimate your swim time. Try and be as accurate as possible so there is less chance of bumping into others. You can then moan at the marshals and the one polishing the water with breaststroke thinking they can do 300m in less than 4min.



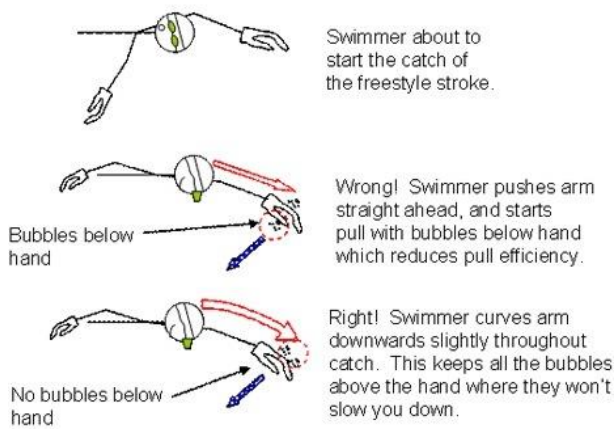
Goggles



Have a couple of pairs to match the conditions. As well as acting as spares, you may find tinted ones helpful on sunny days in open water.

Technique

I would argue that good technique is both quicker and more efficient than raw power. Test it out. Time yourself thrashing out 300m as fast as you can. Give yourself enough rest and repeat the 300m but this time try and maintain a quick but smooth, even pace. Your thrashed 300m is probably quicker by a few seconds but the effort saved with a better technique could save you minutes on the bike and run.



As you only really see your hands and arms below the water (and a few bubbles) when swimming, try and have someone film your stroke. You could be surprised.

Swim Caps

I would always advise wearing one, but, as of 2016, they are compulsory. Possibly wear two. Put goggles on under your cap to help prevent them getting knocked off.



Open Water Swimming

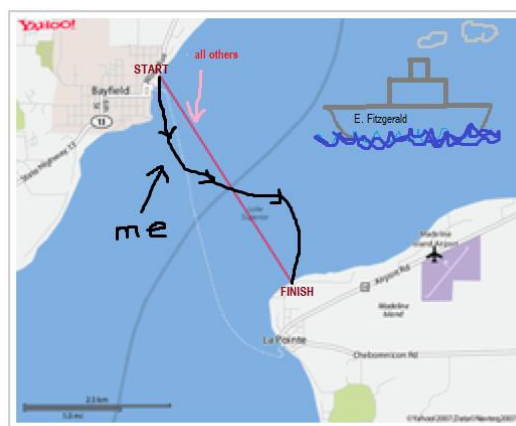


This can be congested so expect to get battered. People are not doing it deliberately but it's every man for himself. Swimming a little further, just wide of the buoys, can help avoid getting punched and kicked. Practice open water swimming if possible.

Position yourself well at the start. I would not advise the middle of the pack if it's your first open water event or swimming is not your strong point. Towards the edges can keep you out of trouble.

Sighting

It's surprising how much of a straight line you think you are swimming in when actually you're not. This being the case, practice sighting and raising your head out of the water routinely. E.g. every 8 strokes. Don't just follow the guy next to you. He could be doing the same thing.



Wetsuit

You can do several things to help with a speedy wetsuit removal. Many athletes cut the legs down to about midpoint on the calf. This means the suit is wider to get over the ankles and feet. If, however, you're like me and don't kick much, you may want to keep the extra buoyancy with longer legs.



Have your race belt on under your wetsuit. It saves time and avoids fumbling with another clip with wet, slippery even cold fingers.

You can purchase neoprene lubricant and smear this on both your arms and legs and on the suit.



Another removal technique is to pull the neck of the suit open just as you finish the swim and stand up. 'Flooding' the suit helps with removal but if you have a long route to transition, the effectiveness can wear off

Transitions

Practice

Practice transitions so they are routine. An old wetsuit is good for this as some triathlon wetsuits are quite delicate and easily damaged. I would avoid sitting down. It's harder to get back up.



Please be aware that you are not permitted to mark your position in transition. Items such as clothing hung over your bike is likely to be removed by officials.

Have visual landmarks in your head as to where your bike is and walk it through from swim exit. For me, the flags were really useful in Edmonton. The Canadian flag was my row whilst the Argentinian was how far up.

Kit

I always take more than I need to the race venue. Then, at least, I have it to hand if needed. However, be aware of the regulations regarding what equipment you can leave in transition. Some are 'clean' transitions and only equipment used for the race is allowed in. Others may allow you to lay out a small towel and box to store shoes and helmet.



Bike Racking



Smaller people with smaller bikes may find both wheels are off the ground when they rack their bike. On windy days this can be a problem. Bikes, even with aero bars, can often be racked forwards using the brake levers. The back wheel should then touch the ground, improving stability.

Many people also place their helmet on their bars. This is quick and easy but, again, on windy days I have seen a few get blown off.

Shoes

Talc up both cycling and running shoes to help get them on but don't overdo it



Cycling shoes attached to bike?

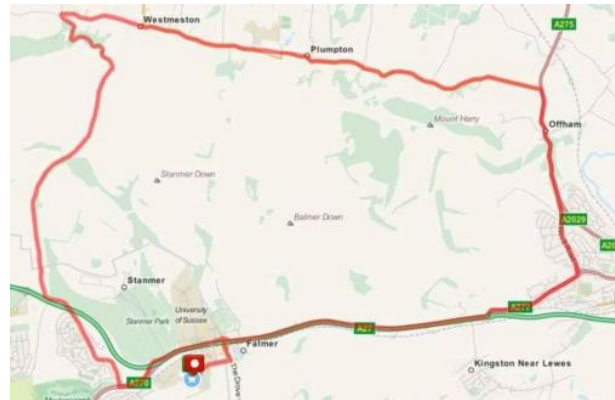


This is a fine art in itself and I have seen many people mess it up and gain no real advantage from it. An alternative is to use MTB shoes and pedals. You can, at least, walk if not run in them reasonably well. (Be warned, these lovely shoes cost around £250)

Bike

Course Familiarisation

Knowing the course allows you to focus on the race rather than where you need to go. Drive or ride the course close to race day.



Race Pace



It's very easy to set off like a bat out of hell but lactic acid can soon build up in your legs and overall performance suffers. Certainly start fast but I try and hold a little back for the first few minutes.

Race Rules

Stick to the rules of the road/race. You don't want a DQ or a time penalty for dangerous riding (like this guy crossing the white line).



Cadence



Your run cadence can often be quicker than your bike cadence so try and increase it a little towards the end of the ride as this will help acclimatise your legs.

Run

Shoes

Many athletes have 'race shoes' and train in stability or cushioned shoes.



Try out elastic laces. These are cheap and save seconds.

Some models of 'race shoes' don't even have laces and are more like putting on a sock with a sole.



Pacing



If someone flies past you, let them go. They're either too good or naive and you'll pass them later on. Try and pick off people one at a time.

Further Suggestions

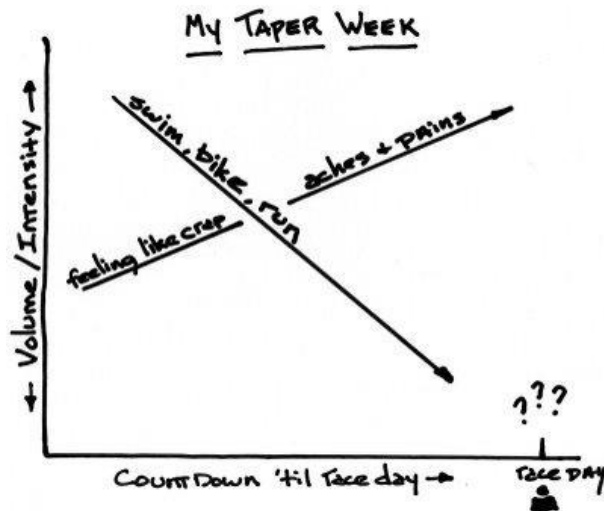
Training



There is no substitute for hard hours but remember quality rather than quantity. If performance was directly proportional to the amount of training, then even average ironman athletes would win sprint distances.

Vary your training rather than trying to just get faster on the same old rides and runs. HIIT training can make a big difference.

Tapering?



This is not as necessary for the sprint distances. However, maintaining the intensity but reducing the distances can work well.

Bike & Gears

Make sure your bike is in the right gear for setting off and not racked in that tough gear you battled with at the end of your last training/test ride.



Flip-Flops

These are really useful to wear once you are changed and ready to go. You can leave them at the water's edge or pool side and collect them once the race is over. If they've disappeared, it's no great loss. You can pick a cheap pair up from £1 shops



Race Number

Take a pair of scissors to cut holes in your race number for your race belt rather than trying to find some vaguely suitable implement and injuring yourself with it.



Keys



If you don't have a support team with you, where do you leave car or locker keys?

Locks like these remove the need to carry or hide your keys.

Don't try anything new



Don't try anything new on race day. It's not the time to be trying out the new cycling shoes you've been saving since Christmas.

The finish line

My opinion only - If you can sprint the finish, you've left it too late. If you burn out before the line, you've done too much too soon. Have enough left to battle it out if you have to.



Last Gasp



I hope you've managed to gain a few ideas and thoughts to help you sharpen your performance in this demanding sport. Above all, enjoy it! You know it's going to hurt. It should hurt. Just let it hurt but enjoy the glory when you cross the line.

Aim high, really high - just because that bloke who always beats you is there again. Well, today is not his day. Today is your day.

Self belief goes along way. Don't let anyone tell you, you can't achieve.

And never, never, ever give up.

Pip Moore 2017