

# You are More Than a Finish Line

Steph Corker, iamstephcorker@gmail.com

Being AAA-type humans, triathletes are known to geek out over data, aerodynamics, customization and anything to look and be as fast as possible on race day. As a self-proclaimed tri-geek, I live for the joy of swim/bike/running through my days. This has proven to be a battle between my Coach, Jasper Blake and I. He believes in numbers; I believe in heartbeats. Together, we have found a really beautiful common ground that I think is both unique and special -- where I can sweat for the love of it and he is responsible for creating the plan for me to deliver on.

Don't get me wrong I understand that knowledge is power. I understand the science behind crafting the perfect training build, with a taper that will have you ready to perform your best on race day. I understand why I need to ride within a certain zone and run with a prescribed heart rate. I get that. Yet I really truly believe that there is more to this sport than what our Garmin will ever tell us.

Our data will never show us the sacrifices made to get to bed at 8:30pm every night. Nor will they show us what it feels like to miss a friend's birthday or a family reunion to get in our long ride/brick run/recovery swim on a Saturday. We make these choices on the hope that our dedication to the sport, or the dream, will impact our data and ultimately impact our results. What is missing is the feeling that comes along with the numbers.

Running down Ali'i Drive in 2012 was a feeling that I hold near and dear to my heart. It was a feeling that shifted my perspective on what I thought was possible in my life. As a 29 year old, I had completed one of my biggest dreams -- crossing the finish line at Ironman Hawaii, before the sun set, surrounded by an army of love. Pure aloha!

And I've toed 5 Ironman start lines since on a quest to return to the Big Island, as



If I bring the same heart and hustle to training as I do to my own business or making family dinner, than I get to celebrate all finish lines...

a 30-34year old female. Why? Because I'm chasing that feeling of running down Ali'i Drive. The feeling of giving it my all... of never giving up... of the sweet spot where patience and grit meet. The feeling of running down a dream!

I've yet to experience anything else in my life that gives me Hawaiian butterflies quite the same, so in my opinion, it's worth it to stick with it, day in and day out.

Racing at the World Championships is a goal of many -- to race at the highest level of a sport we pour so many hours, dollars and heart beats into. Yet what I've learned along the way is that so long as you know the feeling you are chasing, the results will not matter quite as much.

Last year I raced 4 Ironman's - 1 was a total bust and the other 3 were cranked out within a 3 month window. Each race was a little bit faster and slightly better executed than the one before it. However, in all 3 races I

missed qualifying for Kona by 1 or 2 spots consistently. At the time, it felt like total heartbreak. And yet, I was able to gain perspective when I looked back on each finish chute and knew that those same Aloha feelings were fully in tact: I gave it my all, I raced with guts + grit, I never ever gave up and I continued chase down the dream.

I believe how you do anything is how you do everything, so if I bring the same heart and hustle to training as I do to my own business or making family dinner, than I get to celebrate all finish lines, proverbial or otherwise, in every area of my life with something that my watch can't quite quantify. And to me, that makes it worth it!

A proud Ontario transplant, Steph currently lives, sweats and grows kale in Vancouver, BC. By day, she runs a people consulting business injecting heartbeat strategies into companies who care. She is a member of B78 Coaching and will be back to Whistler for Ironman #11 in July! Her website is [www.stephcorker.com](http://www.stephcorker.com)

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## COACHING EDITION: WHAT YOU'LL FIND INSIDE

- |    |  |    |   |
|----|--|----|---|
| 2  | COACHING FOR SUCCESS                                   | 15 | 6 WAYS THAT FEAR UNDERMINES YOUR SWIMMING POTENTIAL |
| 5  | COACHES: MORE THAN DELIVERING PROGRAMS                 | 18 | TIPS FOR YOUR BEST LONG DISTANCE TRIATHLON          |
| 7  | COACHING CERTIFICATION: NEW LEVELS, NEW ACCOUNTABILITY | 20 | TRIATHLON RACING ETIQUETTE                          |
| 11 | MOTHERHOOD: BRAVE NEW WORLD                            | 24 | TRACK TRAINING FOR FASTER RUNNING                   |
| 12 | FIVE THINGS THAT MAKE A GREAT COACH                    | 26 | TRAINING, TESTING, AND COACHING WITH POWER          |
| 13 | HOW TO OPTIMIZE YOUR SLEEP                             | 28 | YOU ARE MORE THAN A FINISH LINE                     |

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[Sports], properly coached, provide a special arena for learning about oneself and life. The old saying “it’s not whether you win or lose, it’s how you play the game” hungers for the sequel “and how you grew from the experience.”

- Walton, 1992

# Coaching For Success

Kristine Chambers, B.H.Kin., M.Sc.

The longer I coach, the more I realize how much more there is to learn. Ironically, the more I learn, the more I realize how much I THOUGHT I knew but had no idea I did not know. How is that for a philosophical tongue twister? Reflecting on over 25 years of coaching experience mixed with current (and long-standing-but-only-recently-gaining-mainstream-acceptance) research, several fascinating themes emerge. The goal of this article is not to preach a position or belief but to ignite questions for you to consider as athletes, coaches, parents, and PEOPLE.

## What is Success?

In high performance sport, “success” is synonymous with “results” such as podium performances and win/loss records. If we step back and view sport as a microcosm of life, the definition of success blurs. “Psychological well-being and optimal functioning and learning in a broad range of domains appear to depends on support for, or satisfaction of, basic needs: competence, autonomy, and social relatedness.” (Lewthwaite & Wulf, 2012)

If we consider SUCCESS not as a destination but as a road toward optimal functioning, this trio of criteria offer a starting point for defining benchmarks of both athlete and coach success. As Galileo mused, “*Measure what is measurable, and make measurable what is not so*”. (Gordon & Sorkin, 1959)

## 1. Competence

Humans are fueled in part by a need to feel competent (e.g. Deci & Ryan, 2000). Sport provides an ideal arena for developing skills and the ensuing beliefs that one can improve abilities and overcome challenges. And PERCEIVED competence is more important than actual competence! So the BELIEF that one is competent has more positive effects than objective, comparative ability. For example, studies have shown that giving people feedback after their “best” attempts resulted in more effective learning than people receiving feedback after their “poor” performances (e.g. Chiviacowsky & Wulf, 2007). Recognizing positive performance and ignoring less successful attempts has also been linked with increased intrinsic motivation and perceived competence (Badami, VaezMousavi, Wulf, & Namazizadeh, 2011).

This is known as the ventilatory threshold (VT) and indicates that the athlete is buffering lactic acid by breathing off non-metabolic CO<sub>2</sub>, and it should correlate with OBLA when you plot [La<sup>+</sup>] as a function of power. VT is highly accurate, and for the trained coach who does not have a lactate analyzer, it is a reasonable method to use in place of lactate blood samples. VT and LT should also correlate to a perceived effort of 15-17 on the Borg Scale. In my experience athletes tend to feel that their test LT is harder than the effort level they believe they can maintain for an hour. The LT test is completed when the athlete is clearly beyond OBLA. Note that this is a sub max test, and is not taken to exhaustion. This is the same test protocol that USA Cycling uses with their elite athletes.

## Using the LT Test to Define Training Zones

Zone:	Recovery	Aerobic Dvlp		Tempo		LT			VO2
%LTHR	<65	70	88	89	93	98	100	102	103-Max

Table 1: Cycling training zones defined by %LTHR

Table 1 describes the cycling training zones we use for FFT athletes. You’ll notice that there is an intensity gap between Recovery and Aerobic Development and again between Tempo and LT. The first gap is to emphasize the concept that Recovery rides are easy and should not flirt with a workout aimed at increasing one’s aerobic base. Also note that there is no minimum level of intensity for Recovery rides, the goal is simply to pump blood through the muscles and enjoy being on the bike. The gap between Tempo and LT is a reminder that intensities close to LT, but not at or above LT are low-yield in terms of raising LT. Ideally, LT intervals are done at or slightly over LT, but we use the 98% LTHR value as the bottom of the LT zone to accommodate cardiac drift early in the workout (at a steady intensity, it takes HR some time to catch up). When fit and rested, it can take half the duration of LT intervals for an athlete’s HR to reach LT.

Correlating the training zones to power is simple. For LT intervals use 100% of LTP. For example, if your LTP is 300W, use 300W for you LT intervals, until 300W is too easy, and then increase (usually ~1-2%/week). For recovery rides, power isn’t important. For Aerobic development and tempo workouts, use a steady state power such that you HR achieves the HR goal by the first third of the interval. Tempo is typically 90% LTP, and VO2 is 105-110% LTP, but each athlete will vary based on their critical power curve.

Phase	Workout 1	Workout 2
Base	Rides of desired duration in Aerobic Development and Recovery zones.	Form sprints, single leg drills, high cadence drills. (continue this session weekly for the entire season)
Economy	Weekly big-ring hill climbs for strength with equal time recovery.	Weekly tempo interval: Build from 30 minutes to 60+ minutes during the Economy phase.
VO2max	Weekly VO2 intervals of 3-5 minutes at high cadence with equal time recovery. Total interval duration of 15-20 minutes.	Continue Tempo intervals, or start light LT intervals.
LT	Weekly LT intervals of 6-20 minutes at race cadence with ¼-½ time recovery. Total interval duration of 30-60 minutes.	Race simulation rides. Example workout for 70.3 and Ironman: warm-up then 80% of race duration at goal race pace (power).

Table 2: Example workouts by periodization phase

Of course, athletes need a recovery week every 3rd to 5th week. The end of the recovery week, or start of the following week, is a good time to test for fitness gains with a 20-30’ Tempo interval noting power, HR, and distance. I prefer the sub-max test as a routine training test as it is not intimidating and we have races to test our maximal fitness. At FFT we do not do “test workouts” per se because by doing our key workouts on the CompuTrainer in ergometer mode, each workout provides objective data on fitness improvement. The constant feedback of power data allows the athlete and me to fine tune workouts and adjust the timing of recovery weeks.

Train hard, recover well, and have fun!

Eric Bean is a former professional triathlete and the coach of the Fast Forward Triathlon Pro Development Team presented by Inside-Out Sports. Prior to founding FFT, Bean was the head coach of the Stanford University Triathlon Team, and the USAT Collegiate National Champion. Bean’s breadth-upon-depth understanding of triathlon training is guided by his athletic background as an NCAA swimmer and runner, and time trial master’s national champion cyclist. Eric holds a BS in Aerospace Engineering, an MS in Biomechanical Engineering, and is currently completing residency in Anesthesiology & Pain Medicine at the University of Washington in Seattle. You can reach him at [eric@fastforwardtriathlon.com](mailto:eric@fastforwardtriathlon.com).



# Training, Testing, and Coaching with Power

Eric Bean, [eric@fastforwardtriathlon.com](mailto:eric@fastforwardtriathlon.com)

In this article I will describe how I perform cycling lactate threshold (LT) testing for the Fast Forward Triathlon (FFT) Pro Development Team, and how I specify training zones based on LT power (LTP) and LT heart rate (LTHR). I will also briefly describe how to periodize a season and provide example workouts.

It's no secret that strong cycling is important for triathlon: cycling comprises slightly more than one half of triathlon duration for all race distances from sprint to Ironman, and more capable cyclists are less fatigued for the run. However, the multisport community faces several challenges in training effectively in cycling. The first is a general knowledge deficit: while many multisport athletes have high school or collegiate experience as a tack/cross-country runner or swimmer, far fewer received that same level of coaching and competition experience in cycling. The second challenge is one of logistics: riding from home to a workout destination and back can take longer than the workout itself and expose the rider to the dangers of the road, especially during evening rush-hour traffic. Furthermore, it's harder to gauge intensity on the bike. Whereas in the controlled environment of the pool or track velocity accurately corresponds to intensity, speed on a bike is subject to the variances of hills, wind, and traffic. For these reasons, I prefer to do certain hard workouts on a stationary trainer, and use power as the benchmark for intensity. Of course, this necessitates performance testing.

## LT is the best predictor of endurance performance in events lasting 30 minutes or longer

Lactate Threshold (LT) is the intensity beyond which an athlete fatigues rapidly, and below which an athlete can continue for hours. A well-conditioned athlete can maintain LT intensity for an hour in a race situation when tapered. LT is also the best predictor of athletic performance in endurance events longer than 30 minutes, even better than VO2max. Since nearly all triathlons are longer than 30 minutes, a triathlete's most important training goal is to raise LT velocity (on the bike we use LTP as a surrogate).

Scientifically, LT can be defined in many ways, but I prefer to define it as the inflection point in the blood-lactate accumulation curve also known as the "onset of blood lactate accumulation" (OBLA) (Figure 1). Beyond OBLA the body cannot clear lactate from the blood as quickly as it is produced and an athlete fatigues rapidly. Let me be clear, lactate does NOT cause fatigue or the burning sensation in muscles, but rather other metabolic processes cause fatigue and lactate is an easily measurable surrogate marker of fatigue.

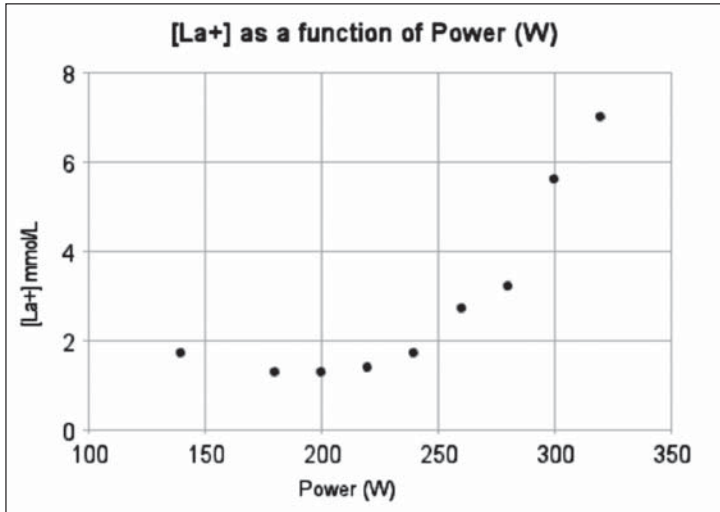


Figure 1: Pro female (Kristin Lemos) LT test performed on a Lab CompuTrainer in egometer mode.

## LT Testing

Performing an LT test is simple in concept and provides a valuable outline of. Since LT can be maintained for an hour in a race situation, a valid field-test for those without an ergometer is a 40km (~1 hour) time trial on a flat course in good conditions. Another option is to do a 20km or 30 minute TT in training (on a flat course or stationary trainer). LTHR and LTP are your average HR and power for the 40km TT, or the average HR and power of the final 20 minutes of the 30 minutes/20km TT. Keep in mind that the shorter test may slightly overestimate LTP.

At FFT we perform LT tests in ergometer mode on the CompuTrainer, who has been a partner and sponsor of FFT since 2010. This gives us the greatest control over, and accuracy of, the test. Each athlete performs a power ramp test and I take blood samples during each work interval to plot the OBLA curve and thus find LT at the inflection point between the slow and fast accumulation of lactate (280W in Kristin's test in Figure 1). Women start at 140W and men start at 150W, and perform an easy "lactate clearance" interval of 4 minutes to establish a baseline—In elite endurance athletes lactate concentration ([La+]) paradoxically decreases during the early portion of an LT test (first 4 data points in Figure 1) because minimal lactate is produced at low intensity but clearance mechanisms increase. Lactate, HR, and perceived exertion are recorded at the end of each interval. After the first interval the load increases 40 and 50W for women and men, respectively. Subsequent intervals are 3 minutes with a 20W (female) or 25W (male) ramp. The coach should note when the athlete's breathing changes from smooth and rhythmic to labored.

## So what?

**ATHLETES** - do you choose to focus on feelings of competence (e.g. in skills, performances, workouts, distances, etc.)? Do you record accomplishments, celebrate new levels of skill acquisition, and CHOOSE to concentrate on the positive areas of your practice?

**COACHES** – do you use language that supports positive competence? E.g. Instead of "you still need to improve X technique; let's work on this aspect", try, "you have really improved X part of your technique, now let's take the next step and focus on this aspect". The first comment couches the correction as remedial work whereas the second comment scaffolds it as a positive step forward. \*Note this does not mean ignoring what needs to be corrected and improved; it means re-framing the correction as an addition, change, or variation.

**LIFE: MEMBERS AT LARGE** – are we strong enough in our personal confidence to recognize the competence of other people (and tell them)? If we are not, do we practice self-talk, visualization, and other mental skills to start building the framework of perceived competence? Are we ready to embrace new paradigms being revealed by neurobiology (e.g. brain plasticity, mirror neuron systems), energy (e.g. existence and influence of chakra energy centres, aura or energy



fields), and ancient traditions (e.g. TCM – Traditional Chinese Medicine, acupuncture) to modify pathways in our bodies' competence / confidence pathways?

## 2. Autonomy

Control leads to compliance; autonomy leads to engagement. (D. Pink) Autonomy is related to the need to control or actively participate in determining one's own behaviour and actions (Lethwaite & Wulf, 2012). Possessing self-direction, or at least the belief that one has control over portions of their life, is a powerful indicator of motivational health in and out of sport. Lack of perceived control over life is not only unsettling but can have serious, long term health implications. Ironically, traditional sport involves



a high degree of coach control over training, set, repetitions, and feedback. Does this promote success...or deter it? Does giving people more autonomy result in leaders relinquishing control... or is the opposite?

## So what?

**ATHLETES** – do you feel control over your body, training, and life? Do you **choose** when to use external measures (e.g. heart rate monitors, power meters, coaches, etc.) to provide feedback? Do you prefer to use intuition and develop sensitivities to physiological, biological, cognitive, and emotional adaptations to training? Do you ask questions (of coaches, experts, researchers)?

**COACHES** – do you include CHOICE in your approach to training with athletes? Do you encourage athletes to ask for feedback when they want it? Are you open to questions? Do you promote athletes' discovery of their own learning (e.g. comparing / contrasting and trying different techniques, not just "one right way")? Do you ask athletes questions about their perception of performance BEFORE you give feedback? Do you include options for athletes in training (within the bandwidth of physiological and technical training parameters)?

**LIFE: MEMBERS AT LARGE** – Do we increase our personal perception of control by controlling others...; or will we eventually realize that to fundamentally increase our autonomy, we have to give the gifts of control and choice to others in our lives?

## 3. Social Relatedness

Similar in scale to perception of control in terms of long term health, perception of SOCIAL SUPPORT is an area we often forget in our world of social media, "isolation in crowds", and increased social contact but decreased social CONNECTION. Sport provides a powerful common base for people to feel connected. Triathlon in particular, has a history of emphasis on "the sport

(Continued on page 4)



as our family". Human beings need other people (in varying amounts but we all need each other). Again, it is the *perception* of social support that is critical for positive motivational and health states.

So What?

**ATHLETES** – are you consciously supporting your fellow athletes, celebrating at the Finish Lines, and giving back to your sport? *I am a huge believer in giving back and helping out in the community and the world. Think globally, act locally I suppose. I believe that the measure of a person's life is the affect they have on others.*(Steve Nash) Do you take an extra moment to tweet good luck (before an event) to someone on your team who you do not always see eye-to-eye with? Do you volunteer at a local race or help inspire new athletes to try the sport? Do you say HI to people at practice, even if they are "odd", different, or "can't do anything for you politically or personally"? *You can easily judge the character of a person by how they treat those who can do nothing for him.* (Johann von Goethe)

**COACHES** – are you integrating planned opportunities in practices for athletes to meet people they do not normally associate with (e.g. partner intervals or warm-up / cool down team challenges)? Do you challenge athletes to give back to their sport, and model volunteerism yourself? Does your team or group volunteer at a chosen event each season? Do you meet and greet each athlete (every practice) in a positive manner, no matter what your personal emotional state may be?

**LIFE: MEMBERS AT LARGE** - Do you *listen* to others in your life with two ears open and one mouth closed? Do you pay attention to the energy and body language of others? (In a normal conversation, it is estimated that between 65 and 93 percent of the social meaning is NON VERBAL! (Ambady & Rosenthal, 1992; Burgoon, 1994, Ketrow, 1999 in Johnson, 2003)). Are you truly mindful



of others, their intentions, actions, and messages when they are asking for your attention? Do you treat people the way you want to be treated?

Conclusions

We all "play" sports for different reasons. Success for every athlete and coach is defined by different paths and destinations. However, there are common elements across our human experience that help make these journeys more efficient, enjoyable, and ultimately SUCCESSFUL!

If we feel competent,

If we feel in control,

If we feel connected,

Then it's all good.

Humans are fueled by a need to feel competent, in control, and part of a community. (Various photos: K. Chambers Exceleration Triathlon club)



Kristine Chambers is a coach, facilitator, and sport developer based in Vancouver, BC. She is a mom of three wonderful children, runs a multisport club for over 300 children and youth throughout the year, and co-organizes a Splash n' Dash (swim-run) series in East / North Van for 2500 students each Spring. Kristine has been involved in triathlon since 1994 as an athlete, coach, learning facilitator, and international sport development coordinator. She is a Master Learning Facilitator with the Coaching Association of Canada (CAC), post-secondary instructor, and passionate advocate of using deliberate play to develop physical literacy in children and youth. Kristine has a Bachelor of Human Kinetics (coaching / teaching, minor in psychology), a Masters of Science in Kinesiology (motor learning, neuro-motor psychology), a certificate in Teaching Higher Education, and she is returning to school to complete an Elementary Education degree. She can usually be found running, rolling, tumbling, climbing, chasing, cycling, splashing, leaping, and laughing with random children of ALL ages.

Photos: K. Chambers, K. Hildebrand

Some athletes find the track to be repetitive and boring. Setting goals for splits, rhythm, and cadence as well as breaking the interval into sections of varying effort can help break the monotony.

Tracks can be busy and crowded, making it difficult to carry out interval sessions. If possible, choose times when you know the track will be quiet or if available, have a look at a schedule to see when track groups will be training.

Five Week Track Workout Plan:

Here is a good 5 week progression for increasing Lactic Threshold and race finishing speed:

Try the following (each numbered step is that week's workout) after a good w-up of 15-20 minutes and 4-6 x 70m stride accelerations:

- Week 1: 2 x 1600m (3 min. rest) build pace per lap by :02. - finish at goal 10k pace for the last 400m. 800m recovery jog. 8 x 400m (1') @ :02/400m faster than goal 10km pace. 800m jog recovery. Speed: 4 laps of the track as: accelerate the straightaway to sprint, jog the bends. (total 8 accelerations)
- Week 2: 10 x 800m (1 min. rest) The first 2 are at goal 10k pace plus :04/400m. - descend by each 2 intervals so that the last 2 are at goal pace minus :02/400m. 800m jog recovery. Speed: 4 laps of the track as: accelerate the straightaway to sprint, jog the bends. (total 8 accelerations)
- Week 3: 3000m build every 2nd lap by :02/400m. Finish at goal 10k -:02/400m pace for the last 400m. 800m recovery jog. 6 x 600m (1 min. rest) @ :02/400m faster than goal 10km pace. Speed: 5 laps of the track as: accelerate the straightaway to sprint, jog the bends. (total 10 accelerations)
- Week 4: 8 x 1000m (1 min. rest) The first 2 are at goal 10k pace plus :02/400m. Descend by 2 intervals so that the last 2 are at goal pace minus :02/400m. Speed: 5 laps of the track as: accelerate the straightaway to sprint, jog the bends. (total 10 accelerations)
- Week 5: 20 x 400 (:30 sec rest). All are at goal 10km pace minus :02/400m. Speed: 3 laps of the track as: accelerate the straightaway to sprint, jog the bends. (total 6 accelerations). Be patient...this session gets harder as it goes!

If used properly, the track can be a fantastic training tool to improve running performance and economy. As always, take precautions to avoid injuries, listen to your bodies, and be smart about recovery. Enjoy your new training environment!

LifeSport head coach Lance Watson has coached a number of Ironman, Olympic and age-group Champions over the past 25 years. He enjoys coaching athletes of all abilities. Follow LifeSport on twitter @ LifeSportCoach.

Brave New World (Continued from page 11)

Now when I look at a line up of women triathletes, at every level from newbie to amateur to professional, I feel a special connection for those who are athletes, and even more so as moms. I understand why they're proud. I get why their child's smile is much more important than going faster than the girl beside her. I get it why my friend with kids stressed how important it was for me to reach out to their little hands and give them high fives as I ran past during the races. But I also get why they can't leave the sport for family life alone. I know that when their heart beats in their throat, when their chest heaves for oxygen, when their legs burn going uphill, and when they chafe like they never knew chafing before, that these women are destined to be great in the sport they're in, and that they are in charge of what make them so great. It's not always going to be time, it's not always going to be results - but it can be. And when they line up with other moms, and when they race beside other moms, and when they finish with moms, we're all going to get it.

It's a whole new game. A brave new world.

Gillian Clayton lives in Courtenay, BC, and works part time as a physiotherapist. Previously a CIS gold medalist varsity soccer player, Gillian started running marathons in 2004 and taught herself to swim to complete in her first Half-Ironman in 2010. After only two years of amateur triathlon racing, she won 2012 Ironman Canada as a pro. Her son was born in 2013. See her blog at <http://rundriven.blogspot.ca>.



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**Fun Fact:** We mentioned the Gold Medal Profile for Canada on page 7. For the curious, it's estimated that there are about 200 youth (<age 24) at 80% of the Age Graded Gold Medal Profile in swim+run, about 55 at 90%, about 30 at 95% and about 12 at 95% and higher. Go, Canada! For more, see [www.triathloncanada.com/en/programs/performance/gold\\_medal\\_profile/](http://www.triathloncanada.com/en/programs/performance/gold_medal_profile/).



# Track Training For Faster Running!

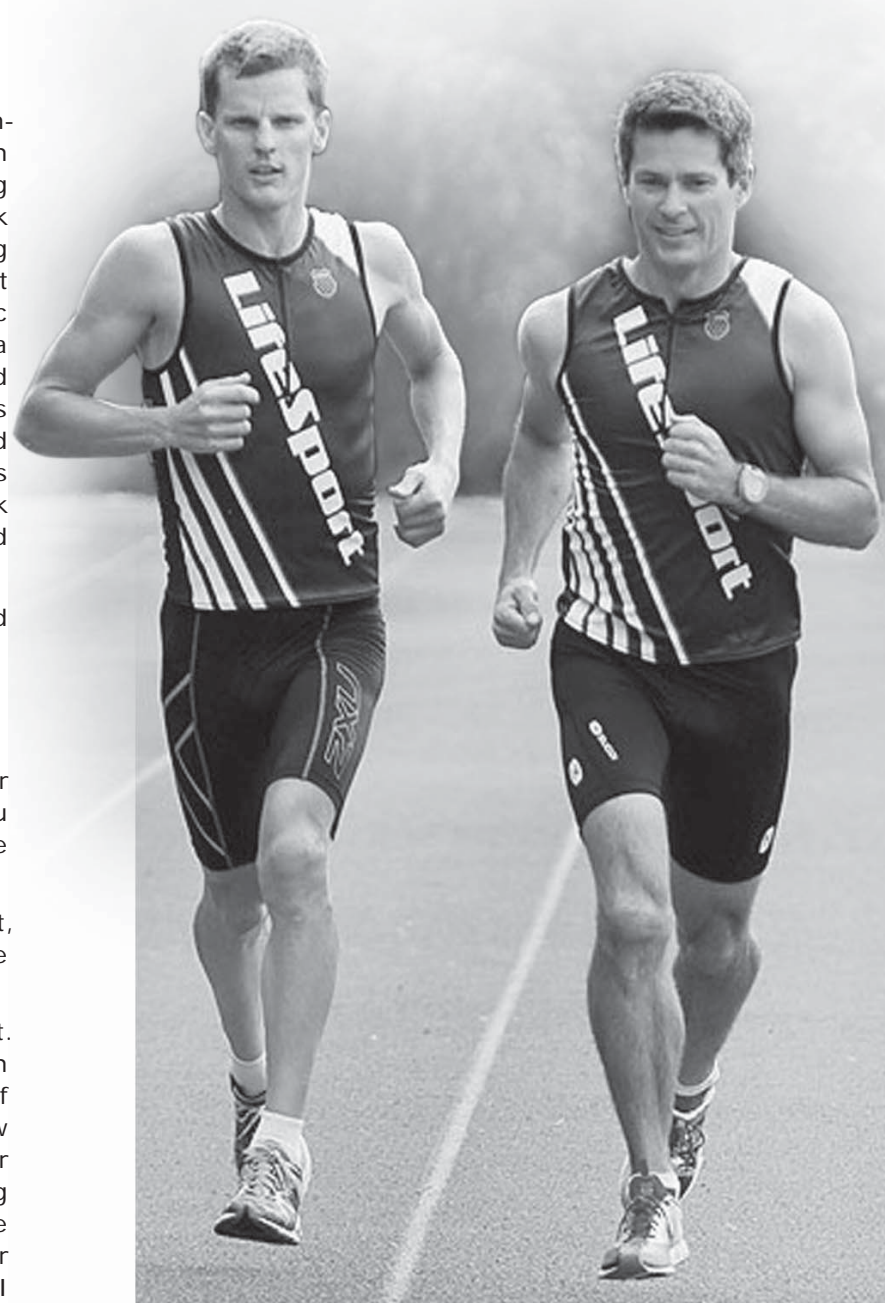
Lance Watson, lance@lifespport.ca

For Sprint, Olympic and Ironman 70.3 training, implementing workouts on the track can be very beneficial. Useful not only for dialing in 10k pace and rhythm, training on the track is a valuable tool for methodically progressing running to a higher level. Running short rest intervals on the track will increase your Lactic Threshold, conditioning your muscle fibers to a faster pace. Training above your lactic threshold will help your body adapt to tolerate and process an increase in lactic acid, which in turn will build stamina and prepare your body for the stresses of racing hills, turns, surges, etc. Overall, track training is ideal for working on speed, pacing and your finishing kick in a controlled environment.

Like any training session, there are pros and cons to track running.

## Pros:

- The track is absolutely quantifiable. In other words, the track doesn't lie. The times you run for specific distances will be accurate and legit.
- The surface of the track is stable and flat, and softer than the road. This will reduce the pounding on your legs and body.
- Intervals on the track are easy to segment. For example, running a 1000m interval can be mentally broken down into two and a half laps of the track. Segmenting it will allow you focus on something specific (i.e., form or pace) for a portion of the interval. Breaking up the intervals like this can also reduce the mental challenge of interval running for some athletes ("Only two and a half laps, I can do this!").
- Track training can easily be done while away from home during travels. Tracks are generic in distance and can often be found around the world, allowing for the repeatability of accurate workouts.
- The fast and flat surface of the track is good for establishing and holding rhythm. Rhythm running is important for triathlon in order to maintain a specific pace for the entire 10k. Teaching your body to hold a rhythm at certain pace in training will help you establish this rhythm right off the bike and keep your pace constant.



The track is absolutely quantifiable. In other words, the track doesn't lie. Here, Brent McMahon (left) trains with coach Lance Watson.

## Cons:

There is a risk of injury. Running the bends of the track can be hard on our lower limbs and can lead to ankle, Achilles or calf injuries. Switching directions whenever possible can help balance out the impact of the corners and reduce the stress put on our one side.



## COACHES: More Than Delivering Programs, They Shape Your Person

Matthew Sharpe, mdsharpe1@gmail.com, @MattSharpeTri

I heard that Triathlon BC was doing an Issue about "Coaching" and wanted to contribute a piece about the important ways coaches supported me as a young athlete and individual. Reading this, you may be inspired to thank or encourage the coaches you know in your community.

Through my time as a triathlete, I've been fortunate enough to have been exposed to high-level and high impact coaches from my development years through to now, as an elite athlete competing for a spot in the Olympics. From a fresh-faced fifteen year-old, to now, a much less fresh-faced twenty-three, there have been two coaches I've worked with who have had a major influence on the important development years of my life.

It's said by the time you're 25 you've developed into the person you will most likely remain for the rest of your life. Your core values have been shaped and you have a strong sense of who you are and your belief system. In my experience of having two unique and highly functioning coaches during my time as a high performance athlete, I can definitely say they've helped shape me into the person I am today, albeit in their separate methods. Looking back, it's clear they came into my life at the right times.

My first coach, Patrick Kelly, took me from a solo-trained athlete and introduced me to the concept of actually training specifically and with purpose for triathlon. When my family made the move to Victoria when I was



From top, counterclockwise: Matt racing, Matt and the boys with Jamie Turner, Matt with PK

Given the experiences I've enjoyed with my two coaches, I can say that the shared pursuit of a common goal can lead to a richer journey in sport.

fifteen, it was the perfect time to begin training with "PK." At the time, he had a mix of athletes from high school to post-grad from UBC. He had created a great environment for someone like me, the youngest at the time. I was able to learn from the experience of the older athletes. This accelerated my development as an athlete and a young man and I fully credit PK for this exposure. A couple of years after moving down to Victoria, my family transitioned through divorce. It was definitely a difficult time for me. Looking back, I know PK recognized this and took on the challenge of helping me through the process. Due to my sporting commitments and other factors, I wasn't able to see my dad as much as I used to, very little in fact. Luckily, I had Patrick as a strong male role model as someone to look up to, alongside the other athletes in our group. He was always keen to chat and knew when to listen and I'm grateful I

had his support during that time. As I progressed through the junior ranks, I was able to find success with PK: I won the Canadian Junior Championships and win my first professional race at nineteen. At that point, I had been working with him for almost five years, and I believe that foundation of experience and the understanding that comes with it played a huge part in my early success. Patrick helped me navigate a difficult period of my life, helping me with both athletic and personal development.

After a tumultuous period where Patrick was no longer my coach, I was a bit lost. Triathlon can be very complicated, and I didn't feel like I was in an environment that was conducive to reaching my full potential. Luckily around that time I was introduced to my current coach, Jamie Turner. I had actually met him a few years before and I was fortunate enough

(Continued on page 6)





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Photos: Various, sources from M. Sharpe, B. Sharpe.



## Coaches: More Than Delivering Programs... (Continued from page 5)

to have the opportunity to work with him in the summer of 2013 while living and training in Vitoria-Gasteiz, Spain. From day one I knew this was going to be a much different experience than with Patrick, as Jamie laid into me and the other Canadians with a lecture on wearing sandals on deck. His voice was loud and we were not used to that. I was shocked about how he went about his business and I knew I was definitely going to have to adjust my expectations of what this new coach-athlete relationship would entail.

Our first one-on-one went like this:

"Your results are sh\*t."

"What?"

"I wouldn't send you to Worlds."

"OK."

This was the exchange I remember from my first meeting with Jamie. Here was this guy who I didn't really know, who I was trying to form a relationship with, and he basically just told me I sucked. I remember being really taken aback. But, as the meeting progressed, something happened. A feeling of excitement took over, as I realized I had a real challenge to take on. I realized this what had been missing in the past year; I knew I needed to be there.

That summer was difficult, but a great period of learning. I became empowered through his philosophy of self reliance, and, looking back, I can see it was my transition from young boy to a young man. I'm grateful for Jamie, and I'm right now in Australia training with his high performance Triathlon squad.

Although a coach is traditionally seen as someone who simply delivers a program, the fact is they are so much more than that. Given the experiences I've enjoyed with my two coaches, I can say that the shared pursuit of a common goal can lead to a richer journey in sport. I wouldn't be the person I am today without them.

Matthew Sharpe (twitter @MattSharpeTri), is a Canadian Elite Triathlete from Victoria, BC. With the ultimate goal of the 2016 Olympic Game, Matt has been splitting his time living and training in Australia and Spain. Matt won the Mooloolaba ITU race March 2015 and has adjusted his schedule to race in China. Follow his blog at [mdsharpe.tumblr.com](http://mdsharpe.tumblr.com).

There is no great width to the draft zone so pay attention to the wind! If the wind is coming at an angle across the road and you are riding in that angle within 10 meters of a fellow competitor, you are drafting. Think of the Tour de France stages in Brittany! The triathlon must NOT look like that! In this case, being directly behind an athlete is not a drafting situation. You may very well be the next Mark Cavendish but it is doubtful the other athlete wants to be your lead-out! Certainly not for 20, 40 or more kilometers!

Most of the races in BC are traffic controlled only. This means that you are sharing the road not only with other athletes but with cars and trucks. In a race, who has the right of way – you or the Mack truck? The correct answer is that the rules of the road still apply. This includes all stop signs and lights.

Although if I am on the bike and you are driving the truck (or car), I will let you have any right-of-way you want.

Passing is always on the left – right? Well, sometimes. If you encounter someone who has not read this article and who is blocking and you pass on the left, crossing the center of the road you will be disqualified. Crossing the center line, even to avoid a draft, is a safety violation and an immediate DQ. So what do you do? You draft and pass on the right if necessary. You can tell the official who penalizes you that I said it was OK – assuming of course you were trying to avoid a blocking situation and not just trying to gain an advantage!

So etiquette on the bike course?

- Obey the rules of the road.
- Stay right except to pass.
- Clearly announce your intentions to pass.

- Move back right after the pass.
- Do not slow down after a pass, maintain your speed.
- Do not speed up after you are passed.
- Always check your shoulder to ensure you are not blocking.
- **Never cross the centre line** – draft or pass right if you have to.

Have a great race season. Be safe and polite. Wear lots of sunscreen and drink plenty of fluids. Most importantly, have fun!

Andrew Armstrong is the Technical Coordinator with Triathlon BC and also an ITU Continental Triathlon Official.

Photo page 22: Kevin Pennock, [kevin@rideguide.ca](mailto:kevin@rideguide.ca), riders include Andrew McCartney and Matt Shape from Canada.

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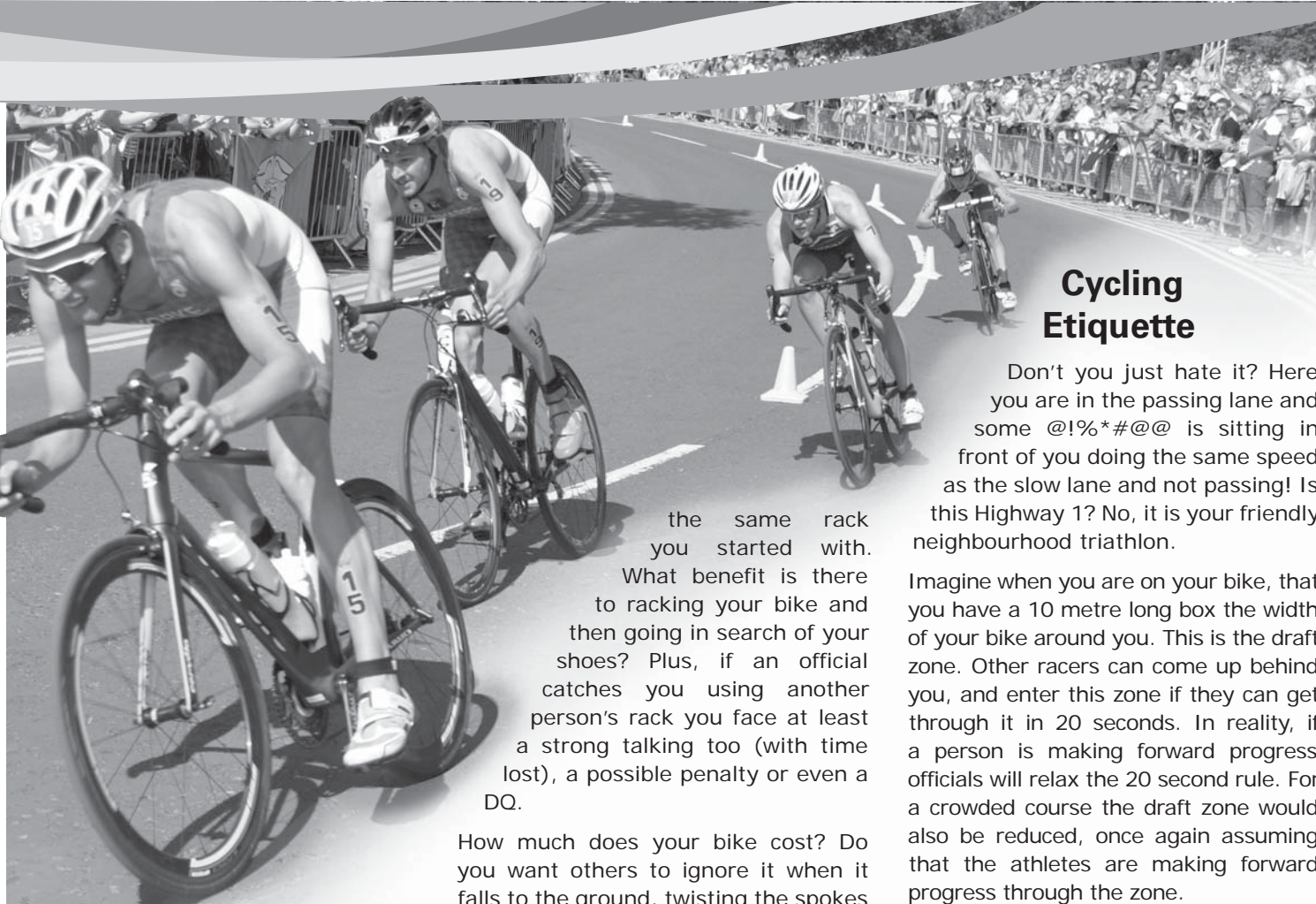
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## Cycling Etiquette

Don't you just hate it? Here you are in the passing lane and some @!%\*#@ is sitting in front of you doing the same speed as the slow lane and not passing! Is this Highway 1? No, it is your friendly neighbourhood triathlon.

Imagine when you are on your bike, that you have a 10 metre long box the width of your bike around you. This is the draft zone. Other racers can come up behind you, and enter this zone if they can get through it in 20 seconds. In reality, if a person is making forward progress, officials will relax the 20 second rule. For a crowded course the draft zone would also be reduced, once again assuming that the athletes are making forward progress through the zone.

So if you follow too close and don't pass, you are drafting. But what is happening in our Highway 1 incident? This is "blocking." An athlete has taken a position on the course that forces all other athletes to draft in order make progress. Blocking is an offence and officials will penalize athletes who are caught. Blocking is in fact a worse offence than drafting. Drafting is ill mannered – blocking is downright dangerous! It forces other athletes into dangerous actions.

When we approach to pass we should always make our intentions clear. "Passing on the left" or "on the left" are common refrains. The reverse is also true. Having gone left, we should all move right at the earliest possibility, and stay there until the next pass.

What do you do when you are passed? Many people speed up and try and re-pass. The proper thing to do is to fall back out of the draft zone (10 metres or 7 bike lengths) before you re-pass. Sometimes, after the success of a pass, some athletes relax a little. In this case you are free to re-pass immediately.

the same rack you started with. What benefit is there to racking your bike and then going in search of your shoes? Plus, if an official catches you using another person's rack you face at least a strong talking too (with time lost), a possible penalty or even a DQ.

How much does your bike cost? Do you want others to ignore it when it falls to the ground, twisting the spokes around your neighbour's pump or having someone sprint to the run exit through your precious carbon fiber? If not, then take care how you rack, and look out for other bikes at the same time. If a bike falls, pick it up.

Transition is often referred to as the 4<sup>th</sup> discipline of triathlon. Before a race, try some transition intervals. Set up transition in the garage. Have your spouse, significant other, lover (or all 3) help. Then do a short run (1 km), transition, short bike (2-5km), transition, run, transition, bike, transition, etc. After each transition, have your assistant(s) re-set the transition. If you do this before each race, your transitions will soon be the envy of all your friends for their speed and smoothness.

Races have been won and lost in transition and a smooth one will make every other element of your race that much easier to concentrate on. An organized transition spot, with plenty of space on either side, consideration for your fellow athletes, and the practice of transition etiquette will improve your times and your enjoyment of the sport.

your bike and since the other athletes have ensured that their bike is securely racked (not balancing precariously on a single seat bolt), you take off your bike carefully and pick up any bike that, by a rare mistake, may have fallen.

Coming back, you arrive in transition, all the racks are empty (or full or half full or half empty, depends on your speed and perspective) and wonder where your shoes are. Since you did not tie a yellow helium balloon saying "Happy 80<sup>th</sup>" to your rack with a teddy bear and a pink flamingo (or if you did, the officials have now removed it since you are not allowed to mark your rack), where do you go? Before the race every experienced athlete "walks the transition". They count racks, look for landmarks, do whatever it takes to simply remember and find their transition spot. Do not base it on the colour of the bike beside you; it may not be there.

When you practised unracking your bike did you practice racking it also? Bikes should be placed on the rack. They should not be thrown or launched from metres away. You must also use

# COACHING CHANGES IN TRIATHLON CANADA: New Levels, New Accountability

Lara Spence, Editor, [info@tribc.org](mailto:info@tribc.org)

There are exciting changes happening in coaching certification and education in Canada. Being rolled out in early 2016, the changes will take effect gradually, and will be fully implemented by mid-2016. All changes to the coaching certification process are focused on improving the athlete experience.

After an hour of Skype discussions and document sharing with Alan Carlsson, Director of Talent Development for Triathlon Canada, I was convinced that this new coaching certification program will help achieve the goal of having coaches at all levels delivering current, consistent, safe, and relevant programs to athletes across the country.

"Changes in coaching are all part of the systems alignment we are working on in Triathlon Canada," says Carlsson. "In 2014, we introduced the Gold Medal Profile, which provides transparent guidelines for junior and senior athletes serious about earning a podium finish at the Olympics. In 2015, we are introducing changes to coaching because, as we all know, podium performances have a lot to do with athlete and coach. Our coaching material hasn't had an overhaul since 2005, and the sport and educational methods have changed. The revised program will include fresh material, and the tiered and accountability-based system will provide a way to ensure that offerings are consistent and athletes know exactly what they are getting."

The program is also anticipated to help address challenges athletes face with the increasing availability of online coaching.

Carlsson says: "This revised coaching program will make coaching more athlete-centered. We believe a system where the coach is measured in part by the performance of their athletes will result in an environment where more athletes will be performing at their best level."

Here are some details - and please keep in mind that these coaching education program revisions are ongoing, and nothing carved in stone:

## Rolling it Out

The program is being reviewed progressively. As of April 2015, the Triathlon Canada CEO, the High Performance department and the majority of the provinces have weighed in. The program is being reviewed progressively. As of April 2015, the Triathlon Canada CEO, the High Performance department and the majority of the provinces have weighed in. A number of provinces have followed up with one on one discussion outlining their particular needs.

Over the next 8 to 12 months, more stakeholder discussions will be included, updated content developed to align with the current demands of Olympic and Paralympic athletes, as well as those from age group athletes competing in a

spectrum of events; from ultra and long distances triathlons to winter and cross-triathlon.

It is important to note that all existing certified coaches will maintain their certified status through to 2020. Prior to that date, all coaches are encouraged to participate in the process of recertification through professional development modules, as Triathlon Canada implements the program revisions.

## Building from the Foundation: Athlete Skills and Key Performance Indicators

As mentioned in the article I wrote last year on the Gold Medal Profile (<http://bit.ly/1FmO7dh> or the Triathlon Canada page at <http://bit.ly/1FmNYXt>) Canada (and other countries) theorise that podium performances don't just come from athletes with big engines. They come instead from athletes developed in multi-year programs where sport technical skills, mental skills, and strategy are also developed.

Says Carlsson, "This coaching program is the map we need to build necessary triathlon skills from coaching competencies. We believe having coaches dig into the 'whys' with their athletes will help improve athlete performance. Gone are days when the coach would shout 'Roll more' from the pool deck. A preferred method would have the coach break the skill and rationale into manageable chunks. Thinking 'Why does the athlete need to do this?' (Roll more to reduce drag on body, enabling faster speed for same work), 'How do I go about teaching this?', then lastly 'What am I going to do in training today to teach this?'"

SKILL	DESCRIPTION
Food Knowledge	The ability to identify the nutrient composition of particular foods and use them appropriately.
General Nutrition Skills	The ability to plan, shop and cook a meal plan that meets specific performance nutrition needs
Nutrition Periodization	The ability to understand the precise nutrition requirements of a training block and changing a meal plan to meet the demands of the training
Training Nutrition	The consumption of foods and supplements specifically for performance in a given training session
Competition Nutrition	The consumption of foods and supplements specifically for performance in competition
Recovery Nutrition	The consumption of foods and supplements specifically for performance in a given training session

Figure 1 - Example from the "Nutritional skills for triathlon" section being developed.

The athlete skills are grouped into a number of areas, with clearer descriptions taking the place of assumptions (see Figure 1). Skills will be cross-referenced to associated skills,



complementary skills as well as teaching progressions. Suggested evaluation methods as well as teaching plans will be added on an ongoing basis.

Coaching Streams & Certification Level Revisions

In an effort to make triathlon coaching more accessible to all, especially coaches from other sports, Triathlon Canada is revising how an individual becomes a coach. There are three clear stages every coach needs to follow:

- 1. A pre-requisite stage including general coaching courses,
- 2. A triathlon specific learning stage, then
- 3. Full certification.

Pre-requisite Stage

Before registering for a triathlon coaching course, an individual will need to satisfy provincial safety and risk assessment requirements, and take core NCCP coaching theory (see Figure 2).

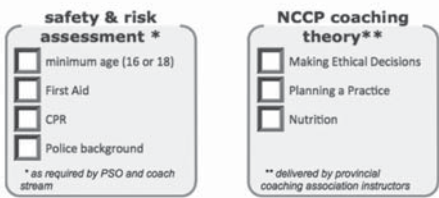


Figure 2 - Triathlon Canada coaching pre-requisites; safety and risk assessment along with proposed NCCP coaching theory.

Triathlon Specific Stage

From there, the new coach would start into the Triathlon Canada stages, addressing the triathlon-specific demands for swimming, cycling and running. When you have completed the relevant theory and practical components outlined in Figure 3, an individual becomes a trained coach, ready for the final stage, certification.



Figure 3 - The theoretical and practical side of becoming a certified coach.

Historically, there is some confusion surrounding the

coaching labels associated with Community coach, Competition Introduction and Competition Development, as a result, Triathlon Canada is reviewing those labels in some detail - definitely a tricky process!

As a working solution, coaches are now being asked to identify what stream(s), or pathway(s), the athletes they coach are associated with. The three streams are illustrated in Figure 4 and now include added options specifically for age group and non-ITU pathway coaches.



Figure 4 - The three coach streams and athletes associated with each.

It is important to note, a new concept being introduced at this stage; accountability, ensuring an athlete-centred coaching model.

What accountability within the coach development model entails, is a review of the athlete's skills (using a template called an Individual Performance Plan, see Figure 5) linked back to the competencies expected of an athlete in that coaching stream (Community, Sport or Performance). At the same time, coaches are expected to identify gaps in their own skills and use this to guide for their own ongoing learning.



Figure 5 - The Individual Performance Plan is a template used to help track coach development from both the athlete skill and coach skill perspectives.

As such, the accountability encompasses two important things: first, it is accountability towards the athletes being coached; second, it is accountability towards ongoing

50 strokes. Not more than one out of 100 strokes would be better. If you're hitting someone's feet more often than that, you're too close or they are too slow. You should pass them and look for the next express train to the swim exit.

There are some swimmers whose stroke is so smooth, whose kick is so mild, and whose line is so straight that you'd never touch their feet throughout the swim, even though if you had a close, economical draft throughout. As a swimmer's stroke becomes choppy, with speed changes and, even worse, directional changes, it becomes hard to keep the draft. You have to adjust your stroke much more frequently, and you'll make contact more than would be optimal. Use your own judgement, but remember the difference between what is polite and what is tolerated. Remember also that the jump from tolerable to intolerable can be sudden and swift!

If someone comes by you who appears an attractive draft prospect, don't wait until that person swims entirely past before you get on. You can get a pretty good draft swimming to the side, a half body length behind. You might be able to comfortably keep that position for quite awhile, and it's easier to gauge where you are relative to your "locomotive" than if you're directly behind. Swim on the hip, taking care, again, not to touch.

If you're swimming beside them, it's not up to you to force them into a straight line. They're in front, and you need to respect that, even if they veer! Don't make body contact. If you don't like the line being taken, get off and swim your own line (though it's almost always better to draft a moderate zig-zagger than break your own water, even if your line is straighter). Don't forget, drafting makes both people go faster so working together, without annoying each other, is a win-win situation. Well, there can only be one winner, but it can at least be a PB-PB situation.

If you want a fast start, but you also want to stay out of trouble and keep from being beaten up, there is an easy



solution: start at one end of the swim. I know a veteran of several Ironman races who had their fastest swim split, by gun time when they were caught in the port-a-potty and started 5 minutes late! Many athletes find they have their best swims when starting out on the edge, because there invariably seems to be a pretty fast swimmer out there who also doesn't want to get pummelled. If you're lucky they'll swim right by you, and you can jump on their feet and ride them to a very good swim. Such a swimmer does not have to worry about starting out at a frenetic pace, and they might be more likely to begin their race at a smoother rate. This keeps you from having to go anaerobic right from the gun.

A good swim can set you up for a great race. Do the right thing and you to can reap the rewards. Now: on to transition!

Transition Etiquette

Triathlon and duathlon are becoming increasingly popular. This causes crowds on the swim and bike and in transition. Survival in crowds, as anyone who has lived in Japan can tell you, depends not only on obeying the written rules, but also the cultural rules.

If the transition zone has assigned racks, you are lucky. The Race Director

and volunteers have taken the many hours necessary to ensure you have a place of your own, that each bike is racked alternately on one side of the rack then the other, and that none are hanging off the end of the rack. Now all you have to do is bring in **only the essential** equipment.

When I look at transition zones these days I often wonder if Rubbermaid shouldn't be a title sponsor. There are enough boxes with lids to organize even the most free-spirited teenager's room. However, there is no need for a chair, a box, a wash tub, a sports bag and a wheeled 3-piece luggage set. All the equipment necessary during the race must fit in a space no wider than your bike (about 42 cm wide or, the width of your handlebars).

Since, when you arrived at the transition, you did as the Race Director wanted and racked on the alternate side of the rack, there is plenty of space for your necessary equipment either beside you (behind your rack-mate's bike) or behind your bike. The two of you should agree on how you want to do this.

Now unpack your box and leave the essentials. You can even leave your \*small\* sports bag. Next, place the lid firmly on your box, grab the handle and wheel it back to the car.

So now we have a nice neat, spacious, well-organized transition. Bikes alternate each side of the rack, bags are carefully stowed for departure and landing, and your table tray is secured in the seat back in front of you (OOPS - too much travelling lately). Now the gun goes off. One by one, the athletes come to take their bikes.

Unracking a bike is usually not a messy process. You have of course planned and tested how to do it before the race. Also, with the cooperation of your fellow athletes, there is room. If your bike is stuck, you yank it harder, pull the whole rack off the ground and dump the other bikes, their water and helmets - **NO**. Since you have tested how to unrack

(Continued on page 22)





# Triathlon Racing Etiquette

Andrew Armstrong, Technical Coordinator, Triathlon BC,  
ITU Continental Triathlon Official

What is legal is not always what is right, or prudent. Legality is simply the limit of what a society is willing to tolerate. It is legal to engage in exceptionally irritating behaviour, or to be quite unethical in business. This doesn't make it right.

This is true in many triathlon races also. Triathletes both allow and suffer some fairly flagrant behaviour in their races. Let's go through the three major areas where following the rules and good race etiquette could very well give you faster times!

## Open-Water Etiquette

Unfortunately, some of the most flagrant bad behaviour that occurs in races takes place in the water. Part of the problem is the difficulty in officiating what goes on in the water. Swimmers are next to anonymous, and it's hard to judge fault; even harder to decipher malicious intent.

The *perceived* lack enforcement does not remove the need for care and etiquette and comportment. I say perceived because even in elite races athletes have been disqualified and even suspended for deliberate

repeated swim contact!

Bad or thoughtless behaviour may not result in a penalty, but there is occasionally an attempt at immediate justice delivered in the water. Like any vigilante solution, this usually fails to benefit either party. Don't you think it is better for you to keep from being the unintended recipient of retaliation? Better also to use the work of others to help you achieve the most economical swim.

The first rule of **thoughtful drafting** in a swim is to touch the bottoms of feet, **not** heels, ankles or calves. Better yet, touch nothing! Above all, your hand should **not** apply any downward pressure on any part of the person in front of you. You already know (or can imagine) what's likely to happen if your hand, upon catching the water, lands on a swimmer's ankle or calf. Their stroke is entirely interrupted, and they don't know where the next arm is going to land - on their thigh - their back? Perhaps you're preparing for a docking manoeuvre, or might swim right over the top. How do they know? One such misplaced stroke can be considered an oversight. However, if I feel two, or even three, strokes in

a row, I must assume you're a callous self-involved egotist and you therefore deserve what's coming to you.

What might that be? Retaliation is often the first response of rookie athletes. Eventually they realize that retaliation is never fruitful. It just ends up costing you time (at best). By the time you do whatever it is you feel you need to do to the person behind you, you could've been several strokes up the course. So don't retaliate. That being said, you can't assume that others will be so even tempered. Now you have two reasons to keep your hands off someone's legs. It's both incredibly rude, and potentially dangerous.

What is acceptable etiquette? Touching the bottoms of the feet of the swimmer in front of you won't interrupt their rhythm. The better you are in the water, the better those around you. More accomplished swimmers are more accustomed to having the soles of their feet struck by the tips of your fingers. If you're drafting correctly you can't help but touch feet every **now and again**. How much of this can you get away with? It depends on the swimmer in front of you. You should try to keep it to not more than once every

learning. Additionally, the accountability serves as a tool to link various Triathlon Canada systems together; coaching, talent ID and development, performance centres, etc.

For coaches working in the Performance Stream (Olympic or Paralympic pathway athletes), accountability extends to third parties who have an investment in the athletes; parents, provincial associations (like Triathlon BC), Triathlon Canada, Canadian Sport Centre, or even Own The Podium!

The new Sport Stream offers new opportunities for age group coaches to step up their game.

For coaches who are doing purely volunteer coaching, the Community Stream offers the minimalist introduction to coaching with no accountability requirements.

As a last step in training before being certified, a coach must complete a season of training.

## Certification Stage

The certification stage of the coach education pathway requires a review of two aspects of a coach; the performance of the athlete(s) the coach is training, and the coach's professional development, or ongoing learning progress.

Within each stream, Performance, Sport and Community, there are coaching levels defined by the performance of the athletes being coach. Figure 6 illustrates the proposed coach levels associated with the Sport Stream.



Figure 6 – Sport Stream Certified showing coaching levels and professional development requirements.

Coaching levels within the Performance Stream are linked to Triathlon Canada's Gold Medal Profile (see Triathlon Canada website for more information on the Gold Medal Profile). An athlete's triathlon performance, as well as run and swim performance all figure into the Performance Stream coach levels.

For Community Stream coaches, a certified level is being introduced under the proposed revisions. Previously, community coaching was limited to trained status only.

## New Professional Development Requirements

All coaching streams have attainable professional development, or ongoing learning requirements. The requirements aren't too demanding if you're passionate about learning and coaching already. These include Triathlon Canada tasks, NCCP theory courses, NCCP Advanced Coaching Diplomas and, eventually, academic courses, along with certification offered through other sports. For example, you earn credits for doing active coaching (most are doing this already), and taking useful and important courses like Safe Group Riding, Bike Fit, and topics like Relative Energy Deficiency in Sport, Concussion Management, Drug-Free sport, Harassment Awareness, Nutrition, and more.

Credits can also be obtained from NCCP theoretical course work (Making Ethical Decisions, Planning a Practice, etc.), demonstrating applied skills (i.e. travel planning, or addressing Daily Performance Environment challenges such as fatigue and recovery, etc.), and practical things like "organizing and coaching a training camp". It's a win-win for all. Eventually, the long term goal is to make all Triathlon Canada theory courses available online

In a huge departure from the historical coaching education model in triathlon, all coaching education material is accessible to any Triathlon Canada certified coach. Information will no longer be restricted based on extrinsic factor. As such, it doesn't matter if you are Community, Sport or Performance focused, you can take any course you have the pre-requisites for (i.e. the advance practical bike course is accessible to anyone with 1) advance theory bike, 2) basic bike practical and 3) basic bike theory). However, don't expected to take a professional development module you have no background in!

Mentoring has been proven beneficial to improving a coach's skills in new areas, and will be facilitated for Sport and Performance Stream coaches by each Province or Triathlon Canada. Mentor coaches will get professional development credits for their role as a mentor.

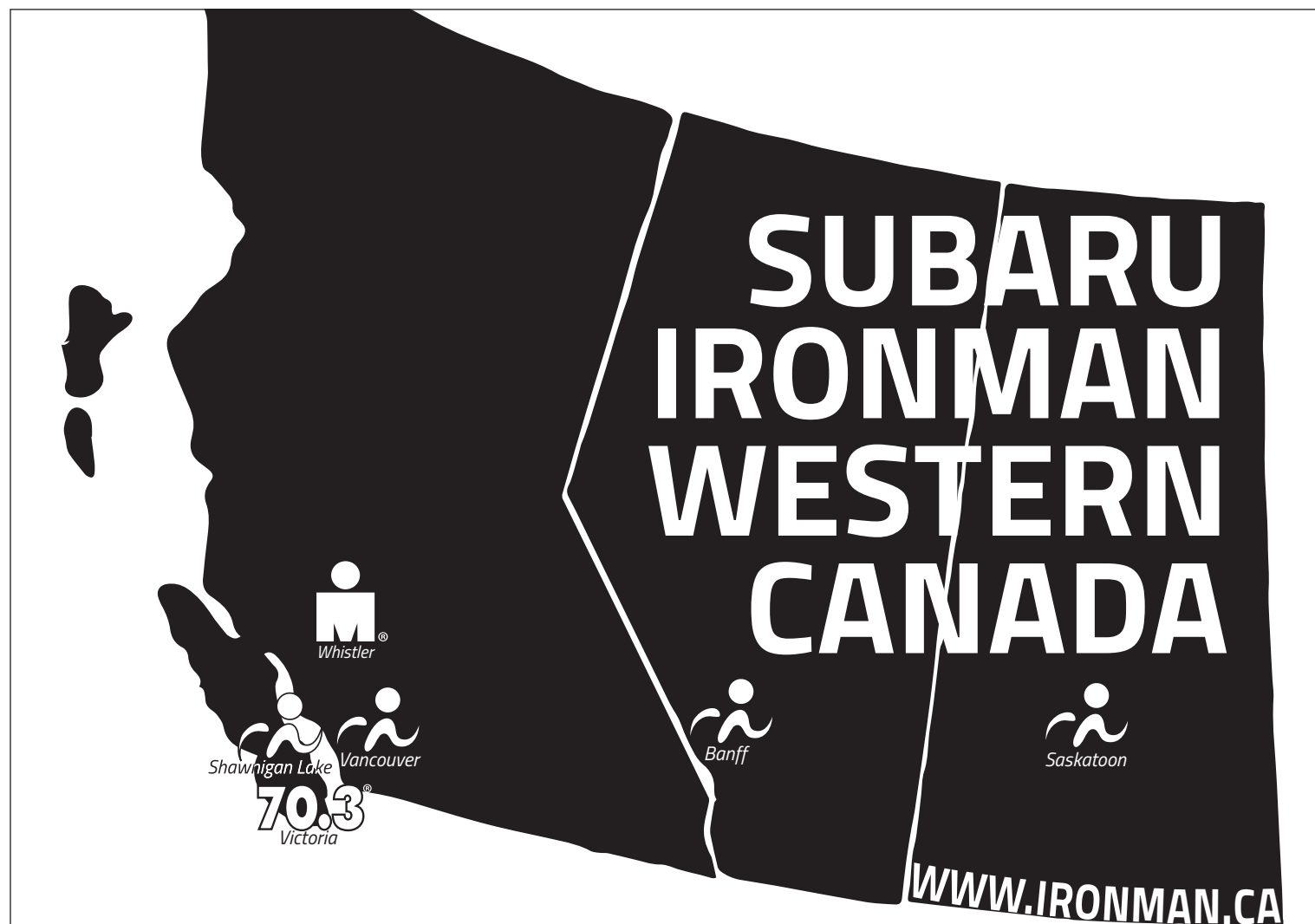
## A Program to Invest In

Carlsson concludes: "We want a coaching program that athletes, parents, and coaches believe in and want to invest in, and I believe we have it. With all this information flow, communication between educators, mentors, coaches and athletes and Triathlon Canada will improve. Everyone will be talking more, learning more."

For more information about what's happening in triathlon development at the national level, see also triathlonmagazine.ca/news/how-triathlon-canada-ceo-tim-wilson-is-shaking-things-up/.

Lara Spence has been writing and editing for TriathlonBC through several age groups. She lives in Vancouver and believes she calculated correctly that she runs at 63% of the Gold Medal Profile speed for women.





We'd like to introduce you to the IRONMAN Western Canada Series! The Subaru Western Triathlon Series has joined forces with IRONMAN Canada to create a full menu of triathlons in Western Canada. Races will include all your old Series favourites as well as IRONMAN Canada in Whistler. Race locations, distances and dates are as follows:

**Subaru Shawnigan Lake Triathlon - May 24**  
Standard, Sprint, High School Sprint & Relays

**Subaru IRONMAN 70.3 Victoria - June 14**  
Presented by Saunders Subaru  
IRONMAN 70.3, Sprint & Relays

**Subaru Saskatoon Triathlon - June 28**  
Standard, Sprint & Relays

**Subaru IRONMAN Canada - July 26**  
IRONMAN

**Subaru Vancouver Triathlon - July 5th**  
Presented by BlueShore Financial  
Standard, Sprint & Relays

**Subaru Banff Triathlon - Sept 12th**  
Standard, Sprint, Super Sprint & Relays

The Subaru IRONMAN Western Canada Series will also include a Canadian TriClub Challenge and a full roster of Subaru IRONKIDS events. Celebrate race weekend with your family and teammates in your choice six spectacular venues across Canada's West Coast, Rocky Mountains, Coastal Mountains and Prairies. Visit our website for more information!



**NUTRITION & HYDRATION:** Ensure you have a pre-race and race-day nutrition plan and stick to it, as best you can. Drink enough water and use a sport drink with electrolytes and carbs to replenish sweat losses and ensure enough calories to get you to the finish line.

**PACE YOURSELF:** Have a specific strategy for maintaining an aerobic intensity and stick to it, regardless of how good you feel early on. It's a long day. This will take more patience than you might imagine. Always remember: the finish line is at the *end* of the run.

Kevin Cutjar is an Australian triathlete who has worked as Jeff Symonds' coach throughout his triathlon career, including his recent Asia Pacific Championship at Ironman Melbourne. Kevin is a 34-time Ironman finisher (8:48 PB in Penticton), an Ultraman Canada and Ultraman Hawaii Champion, and has been a full time professional endurance coach since 2000. He is co-owner and Race Director for Challenge Penticton. For more information, see [www.triathlonwarrior.com](http://www.triathlonwarrior.com) and [www.challengepenticton.com](http://www.challengepenticton.com).

## 6 Ways that Fear Undermines...

(Continued from page 17)

something to be "conquered." Instead, we try to understand it better, break it down into things we can control and things we cannot, and finally reframe the fears in a new way.

Irrational fear is an obstacle to good swim technique, success in training and, most importantly, open water swimming performance. Panic is fear that's spun out of control. You feel powerless and cornered in a given situation. If that's where you are, take a step back and try a different approach.

This is where asking for help is probably the best idea.

Rational fear is a tool for sharpening the mind and understanding the best path forward in a given situation. You

learn what you need to pay close attention to in the moment. You will also come to understand that many of the fears that you might have felt alone in feeling are shared by your friends and fellow competitors. And that it brings you closer together.

Discover your fears; don't hide away from them. And you'll realize your true swimming potential.

Peter Scott is the founder and head coach of Sea Hiker Swimming Inc., a local Vancouver swim coaching business dedicated to helping struggling swimmers at any level swim efficiently and feel at home in open water. Sea Hiker coaches teach small size technique courses and open water swim programs. Visit [www.seahiker.com](http://www.seahiker.com) for more info.

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# Tips for Your Best Long Distance Triathlon

Kevin Cutjar, former pro, race director Challenge Penticton, kevin@challengepenticton.com

We come to endurance sport to test ourselves, inspired by images of elite athletes and weekend warriors pushing to the limit. Television productions make these feats seem almost out of reach, but we ask ourselves: "Could I possibly do that?" Maybe we've crossed that finish line and our question is "Could I do it faster?" Let's consider what it takes to raise the bar in Long-Distance (LD) triathlon.

## Select the Right Coach

There are various approaches to training techniques and philosophy for endurance sport. Some take a scientific approach and others lean more toward the psychology of sport performance. Whether you're stepping up to a new distance for the first time, or looking for a new Personal Best, going to the start line with the confidence that you've prepared well and have a good race strategy is very powerful.

**Hot Tip #1. Choose Wisely.** When choosing a training program or coach, find someone you respect and trust, then follow their system from start to finish. Your time and energy are too precious to waste.

## Plan Your Season

Keep your long distance goal in mind as you schedule preparation races. Provide yourself with opportunities to practice everything from your transition set-up to your run nutrition. Be selective and don't be distracted by too many local events that may stand in the way of a progressive build toward your long distance race.

**Hot Tip #2. Invest in a Suitable Prep Race.** Pick one key preparation race with the same course and climate characteristics and test everything that you'll use in your goal LD race.

## Get Swim Fit

The swim leg of LD triathlons is generally shorter, by proportion to bike and run, than in Sprint and Standard distance, but they are still long swims. Swimming just enough to survive, in the belief that you can easily make up for any lost time once back on land, is a common mistake. Poor swim fitness can have a significant affect on your bike and run and therefore your overall result. You need to exit the water feeling like you're coming out of the shower, not the washing machine.

**Hot Tip #3. Swim train for a better bike and run.** In a nutshell, if you need to swim 3.8km at the start of your triathlon and you plan to run a marathon at the end, aim for a minimum 10k of swimming per week.

## Bike Cautiously

Triathlon is a three event sport, with the finish line at the end of the run. While most time is spent on the bike, long distance triathlon finishes with a half to full marathon run. Consider that your physical condition coming off the bike is as important as your bike time. Your goal is to perform well on the bike, but at a suitable (safe) aerobic intensity that will help prevent nutrition issues, muscle cramping and unnecessary physical and mental fatigue prior to the run.

**Hot Tip #4: Race with a Negative-Split attitude.** Ride the first half of your

bike leg (and long training rides) at an intensity you know you can maintain, or increase slightly during the last half of the ride. This approach will set you up to run your entire run, which is much more efficient than walking.

## Train for Run Durability

Unless you're an elite level triathlete, train to improve durability rather than speed. You don't need to run that fast to have a great result in an LD triathlon, but you do need keep running. High-intensity run training such as intervals and hill repeats have their place in our sport, but can significantly increase the risk of injury. Accumulated low to moderate intensity running, with no time out from injury, will build endurance and resilience. This is far more important than speed for most athletes going long.

**Hot Tip #5. Commit to the run.** Train all season and race all day with the back half of the run in mind. When that is your focus in preparation and what you've worked towards, you won't give up on yourself during the business end of the challenge. You'll be physically and mentally strong and you'll see yourself through till the end.

## Smart Nutrition, Smart Pacing

To do well at long distance, you need a sound training plan. It helps to have some experience before getting in too deep with too many very long races. Most important is that, when setting goals over the longer distances, keep the basics of endurance sport in mind.

# Brave New World

Gillian Clayton, gillianliz@hotmail.com

With the physiological boost of pregnancy, I thought having a child would prepare you for the Olympics.

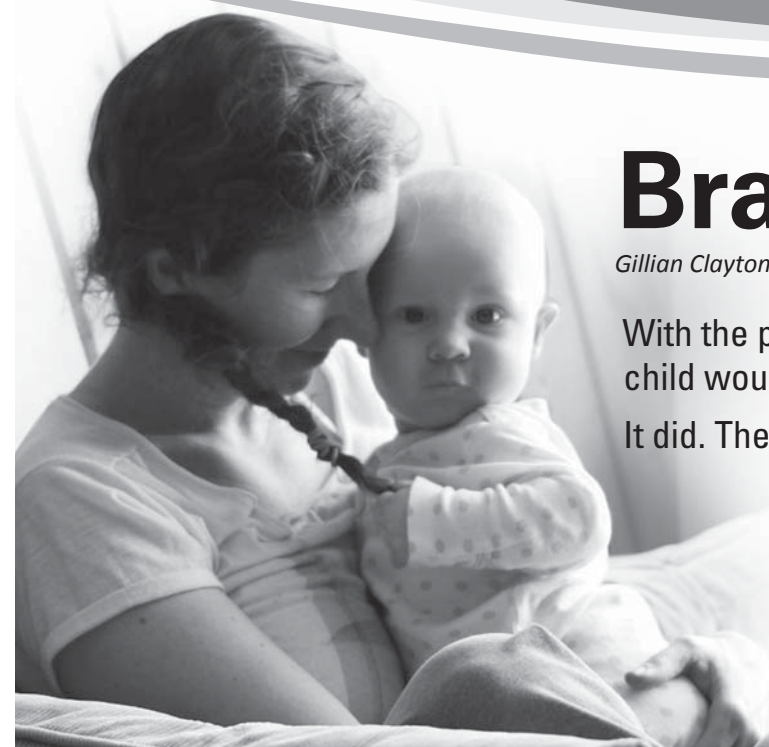
It did. The diaper, nursing and parenting Olympics.

a new body with this very new baby who needs this new body. And if those gals are anything like me, it's a good stretch for your soul to find that softer, gentler side, to be forced to listen and honour your body instead of beating it up on the swim, bike and run. In some ways, some things were very familiar - it was still a time where I sat listening to a heart beat, and sound of a quiet sleeping baby's breath. Becoming in tune with life, which is why I think so many of us love our sport: we get out there and feel alive.

Previously what I didn't pay attention to, was that many of my very inspirational role model mom athletes seemed to disappear for a few years after having kids. There's a quiet period where you just don't see them for a while. "How are things?" you ask, "BUSY!" they reply. Then one day they're back and they're as fast as you are. How did they do that? When you're training multiple times during a day, you think that three months of time off after having a baby is an ENORMOUS gap of time to recover. Heck, three days off is stressful. Many people asked me when I started feeling stronger, fitter. Well, I'd say it's still a work in progress at 18 months postpartum. I certainly wasn't ready much before 9-12 months postpartum before my body started feeling 'ready' - whatever ready means.

Before you have a child, you just don't know the difference - and I think that's good - because I don't think the species of 'triathlete' would continue to exist for lack of populating if they knew just how much time they were going to need to shift to another area in their life.

(Continued on page 25)



Gillian Clayton, BC pro triathlete, with son Matthias, then age 6months.

I'm up early to write today. Mostly because if I wait until our child is roaming around the house banging things with a hammer, it's impossible to divide my attention and have clear thoughts. Maybe it's even wishful thinking to think I could have clear thoughts, but I wanted to reflect a little on being a mama, and an athlete.

As if you could separate the two. As far as I'm concerned, all mamas are athletes.

Here's a quick bio for those of you who don't know me: My name is Gillian and I am a mama to a gorgeous & happy little boy. I also like croissants, and work as a physiotherapist.

One day after completing my first Ironman, I was chatting with some women at work who said, "If you really want to do something, do it before you have kids". So I did something: I won Ironman Canada.

And here is the difference in my life today. I was up 5 times overnight. Today, I'm too tired to run. When I come home from a run (often with a baby-laden Chariot), I often don't get to refuel right away because I nurse my baby. And I'm happy to, as I no longer worry about bouncing back for workout #2. I've been too hard on myself for not 'getting out there' to exercise. It has been much harder than I thought, the mental game. I am my toughest critic. Aren't we all?

I can't sign up for many races these days because committing to a training

program is too much for me. But I'm finding what is right for me, and it is completely different from what I imagined I would be doing. In fact, social media really made me feel like I would be knocking down PBs left, right, and centre, and that with the physiological boost of pregnancy I would be fitter than I ever was. Basically I thought having a child would prepare you for the Olympics.

It did. The diaper, nursing and parenting Olympics.

I was so used to measuring & controlling fatigue. Training is easy, you do it, and then you know why you're tired. Now here I was, more tired than before, without any workouts to show for it. I was so in touch with my body, knowing exactly how much it could push, but now I was feeling a bit confused, and wasn't feeling so great about it. It's a big life transition for postpartum moms, and although I have no data other than my own (and now many other moms who have reached out to me saying they felt the same way), I think especially for athletic postpartum moms. Your racing friends kind of move on without you, and you're in



# Five Things That Make a Great Coach

*Jasper Blake, Head Coach B78 Coaching, Ironman Champion*

Triathlon coaching is unique in that it has evolved very differently than coaching has in other sports. It may be one of only a few sports where having a coach work with you remotely is an accepted and even suitable option. Endurance sports have always lent themselves to this model because of their nature. Having a training program written on paper and mailed via post was not uncommon before computers and email.

In the traditional sense, a coach is someone who sees you on a regular basis. Certainly at the highest levels in any sport a coach who is hands on daily is very important. However, in sports like triathlon or any endurance activity where the mechanics of the activities themselves are quite linear, there is a large emphasis on aerobic development in order to improve. This is one of the main reasons why online coaching platforms have become such a widely accepted and successful space.

After the technical aspects of swimming, biking and running have been developed to a suitable level, the primary gains in speed and ability will come through the physiological adaptations from training. To clarify, in no way should one discount the importance of developing technically. It is still absolutely essential to have the best technique possible. Swimming in particular involves a highly complex series of movements in a very thick medium that can take years of diligent work to master. Anyone who is an entry-level swimmer should seek some in person coaching and learn the basic technical skills involved. Of the three sports, swimming technique can often improve times more than simply



Coach Jasper Blake at a Whistler training camp, 2013, photo: Nick Boyle.

attaining a higher level of fitness. Although running and biking are often more familiar sports for people, there are still technical components that should be developed and worked on with regularity in order to have success.

When you are considering coaching options the first question you should ask yourself is whether or not you would like to be part of a group and see your coach on a regular basis. Or whether you are a solo artist, or someone with limited time who needs a training program that works around your life schedule. This distinction will immediately point you in one of two directions and establish one of the most important first steps in your coaching decision.

When it comes to the actual coach there are some essential qualities you should look out for.

Here are five things that will be present in a great coach:

A great coach will have a **clear understanding of the fundamental principles involved in training and adaptation.**

A great coach will **evaluate what is actually reasonable and possible within the context of the rest of your life.** Often this means accounting for other things that add to your overall stress load. Cramming more into an already full week may not always be the

right answer. Without adequate recovery you may not be getting the most out of the time you do have to train.

A great coach will **establish where you are currently at and where you want to go.** Goal setting and identifying your key objective(s), while factoring in your own personal strengths and weaknesses, is important so that the training points to your desired outcome.

A great coach will **understand that programs are living things.** They are not static or fixed. A great coach will work and manipulate the program when required so that it reflects both your own personal needs and your rate of adaptation.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, **great coaches are great communicators.** They have the ability to get their message across in a way that is easy to understand and instills confidence. Through effective communication, a great coach will help you make smart decisions and help you understand how to get the most out of yourself when it really counts.

Jasper Blake is a USAT Level 1 Triathlon Coach, an NCCP Triathlon Adult Community Coach, and (other sports) NCCAP Level 2 Alpine Skiing, NCCP Certified Tennis Instructor and has his NCCP Fundamental Movement Skills. He is a multi Ironman top finisher, and the 2006 Ironman Canada Champion. See his website at [www.b78.is](http://www.b78.is).

the pool, she had made huge progress. I met her at Kits pool one afternoon to discuss her plan for the race.

After some small talk, she blurted out that she had just swam 8 kilometers the weekend before at Kits Pool. She was happy, but then a frown creased her brow, and then she asked, with an air of resignation:

"So do you think I'm a real swimmer yet?"

She didn't expect me to say yes. I thought she was joking, but she was actually serious. Even though she had achieved a level of swimming that 95% of adult swimmers never dare to pursue, she still had her doubts.

She went on to swim the 10km race successfully a few weeks later. It put a real damper on her own sense of accomplishment at the time – until I argued for the other point of view.

We've seen a number of triathletes who have this mindset. It fuels lots of negative self-talk.

Coaches have a responsibility to see, nurture and share the potential that they see in their swimmers. Especially, if the swimmer does not.

It pains me to say that I have actually met people who have told me that their swim instructor or coach "gave up" on them.

Swimming is not a natural talent; it is a complex exercise. You can learn to swim up to any level with the right combination of patience, persistence and motivation. Coaching can be essential, if it is with the right person at the right time.

My advice to any triathlete who feels this way about their own swimming is to focus on the work you actually do every time you go to the pool. Leave the labels for others to worry about.

And if your coach isn't helping you, find a new one.

## 4. Being Uncomfortable in Your Swim Suit

Swimming is a sport where we are pretty much half-naked. When you go to the gym to get stronger, healthy

and change your body composition, you can wear whatever you feel most comfortable in. And while a gym can still be a mine-field for body image and fashion, being in a skintight swimsuit in a swimming pool adds another level of being self-conscious.

Spend some time choosing a swim suit that you feel good in and that doesn't impeded your swimming too much.

Above all, you do not need to apologize for the way you look when you go swimming. You don't need to be Michael Phelps or Natalie Coughlin to swim laps.

Airbrushing only works on photos and body make-up comes off in the water, anyway.

If you struggle with this aspect of swimming, try this. Close your eyes and be mindful of how excited you are for doing triathlons. Remember why you decided to get started in the first place. Then think of the incredibly supportive community of athletes, coaches, spectators, family and friends who want you to succeed. Picture the richness of experience that you'll bring into your life, like the thrill of your first open water race or getting that 1-ounce carbon fibre water bottle from the tri shop.

Your feelings are okay; accept them and do your best to keep going. Soon it won't matter next to all the awesome things you're going to do next.

## 5. "Doing It the Right Way" Paralysis

Swim coaches usually have strong opinions about the "right way" to learn to swim or train. (I know I do.) It is better for business, especially for the big brand names in coaching, to speak in absolutes – it attracts attention.

While it's helpful for students of swimming to stick with an approach long enough to see the results, coaching dogma can have the undesired effect of making you afraid to make a mistake.

"I don't want to practice bad habits."

"I don't want to put the wrong techniques into my muscle memory."

"I don't want to swim far until I've got the technique down."

"I don't want to screw up my stroke by learning something new."

This leads to a real paralysis in the water: when you're so afraid to make a mistake that you don't stretch your comfort zone, you stagnate and stop learning.

And this can happen with training, as well. We see a lot of swimmers who haven't seen any improvements over years of doing the same thing.

Make mistakes on purpose. See what happens when you try something new, even if it's just to know and practice your creativity with your learning process.

## 6. What Lies Beneath

Okay, finally, we get to probably the strongest fear. It's the most obvious one.

Given the constant reports of shark attacks in the 24 hour news cycle, it's difficult to ignore these events, no matter how tiny the real chances of them happening to you.

File this fear under mostly irrational, but also under self-preservation. If you are really bothered by the idea of what's underneath you, spend some time asking local swimmers what they've seen and encountered. Learn more about the local marine life. Check with lifeguards. And then make a decision about what you're willing to do in terms of the risks you perceive to be there.

No one wants to have a deadly encounter with a creature of the deep. But it is extremely rare, especially here in Canada.

As a triathlete, you can also make the choice to only swim in lakes.

The ocean is way more fun, though.

## Final Thoughts

We look at the fear and anxiety that swimming can evoke in athletes not as

(Continued on page 19)





## DYNAMIC RACE EVENTS

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Think of it this way: If you aren't confident in your ability to handle yourself in a certain situation, then your fear is a very smart thing. You have accurately assessed the risk to yourself.

If you can't tread water or float, then don't jump into the deep end!

Instead of feeling bad that you have this anxiety, consider that you are smart and wise. You just need to be patient and learn the new skills over time that will lessen your fear.

Having seconds thoughts about taking the plunge is a smart thing.

### 3. Feeling Un-coachable, Uncoordinated or Hopeless?

"I'll never be a real swimmer."

"I don't want to hold anyone up in the lane; I'll just stay back."

"My other coach gave up on me."

Swimming is a particularly daunting sport; it isn't easy. The learning curve can be steep, especially for those who come to it later in life.

Somewhere along the line our society convinced us that swimming is a natural skill, as easy as walking. That you just learn to swim when you're a kid. No big deal.

We hold up Olympians as proof of a natural-born talent for swimming. As if there's a magic swimming gene. Never mind the thousands of hours that a swimmer of that calibre must spend in the pool.

I think it's important to include this as a fear that holds us back from realizing our potential for swimming. For some reason, a lot of people start off with the expectation that they can never reach the skill level of being a real "swimmer."

It also appears to be specific to swimming. I'm not aware of this mindset in other sports.

Here's a little story that I think illustrates this nicely:

Four years ago, I was helping a client prepare for a 10km open water swim. She had started swimming as a beginner only 18 months before and with a combination of our coaching and her very hard work in

## How to Optimize Your Sleep

Julie Miller, [julie.miller@questu.ca](mailto:julie.miller@questu.ca)

Athletes spend a lot of time, money and effort trying to rack up every possible advantage before a competition -- from tubs of protein powder, to expensive gear, to high tech gadgets and coaching. But sometimes we miss the obvious. Getting enough sleep is crucial for athletic performance. Studies have found that good sleep can improve speed, accuracy, and reaction time in athletes.

It's a busy world for us all. Work hours are extended, we are involved in more activities than generations before, facing stresses we never did. Balancing work, family, training and a social life is tough. With all you have going on, it is easy to get physically, mentally and emotionally tired. Work, good nutrition, social commitments and training all seem to be at the top of the list of priorities. What gets bumped is often sleep.

And that's where everything else falls apart. Sleep should be the most important priority.

If you miss just an hour of sleep per night you may be a full night's sleep behind your competition in just one week. Sleep is just as important to an athlete's health as training and nutrition. It is importance to embrace the value of sleep to reach your full potential in sport and a healthy life.

According to the National Sleep Foundation, non-active adults need 7-9 hours of sleep a night to function best. Athletes need more. When training harder than ever, sleep is vital to both development and recovery.

Sleep deprivation doesn't just take away some positives, but contributes to some predictable and nasty side-effects: grumpiness, poor decision making, feeling more emotional, difficulty focusing, sleepiness, etc. And that's without the stress of sports training. It's easy to forget that as an athlete you need more sleep than your inactive peers.

REM (rapid eye movement) sleep is when the brain learns or puts information into context; as opposed to the day time function of just gathering it. If you are swimming and your coach gives you pointers about your stroke, the brain replays those sequences at night and learns them to the point of knowing them reflexively.

Growth hormone is released during sleep. It's needed to repair muscle and tissue, build bone, and help with recovery. Not enough sleep adds stress to the body and encourages the creation of cortisol. Cortisol is a hormone created when our body is stressed, it can inhibit the recovery rate of athletes, lower immunity and interfere with skill development and memory. For athletes recovering from injuries or battling sickness, the importance of sleep becomes even higher.

So how do we get the sleep we need?

Having a regular sleep schedule can assist our internal biological clock (circadian rhythms) to be set, allowing us to fall asleep easily and wake up refreshed. Having a consistent bedtime/wake time on weekdays and weekends can help. When we sleep in tune with our circadian rhythms our sleep is more restorative mentally and physically. Inconsistent sleep patterns disrupts this rhythm.

Creating a positive sleep environment will improve the quality of sleep. Sleeping in complete darkness allows the body to produce melatonin

signaling to our brain it is time to sleep. Having white noise to mask outside noise can help to stay asleep throughout the night.

Avoid smart phones, tablets and TV before bed. The blue light that is emitted from these devices prevents the release of melatonin impacting circadian rhythms and pushing off the feeling of sleepiness until you get overtired and your body starts to produce the stress hormone cortisol which gives a little adrenaline push delaying bedtime even further.

Avoid Sugar and Caffeine close to bedtime which can lead to insomnia and less restful restorative sleep.

Create a strong bedtime routine. If you do the same things every night before you go to sleep, you teach your body the signals that it's time for bed. Taking a bath, reading a book, writing in a journal, listening to music are all relaxing ways to signal your body it is bedtime.

This may not be easy at first, but as an athlete, it should be part of your training. It's worth it.

Julie Miller is a Family Sleep Institute certified Sleep Consultant with Mountain Dreams Family Sleep Consulting in Squamish. She is also a therapist and Health and Wellness Coordinator at Quest University. Julie was the Gold Medal winner at the ITU Age Group Long Distance World Championships in Weihai China in the W35-39 age group. Julie's blog is at [www.millerjulie.com](http://www.millerjulie.com).







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Make mistakes on purpose. See what happens when you try something new.

## 6 Ways that Fear Undermines Your Swimming Potential

Peter Scott, Head Coach, Sea Hiker Swimming, [peter@seahiker.com](mailto:peter@seahiker.com)

There's something about the launching yourself into the open sea that brings up our deepest insecurities and irrational fears.

I blame JAWS, the Abyss, and... Sharktopus the Movie.

But there's also the anxieties we encounter every day in our swim training. After all, "just getting to the pool is sometimes half the battle," isn't it?

You may not realize what kinds of fear might be holding you back from your true swimming potential. And, this is not just for beginners. It affects us all, just to different degrees.

Maybe you don't even know that fear is holding you back. Here's six different areas where triathletes getting back into the pool and open water encounter fear:

### 1. Fear of Inhaling Water and Not Getting Air

An efficient freestyle stroke requires you to restrict your breathing. It also requires you to spend most of your time face down in the water.

As land evolved humans, we really, really don't like that.

As soon as our face hits the water our brain shouts out an urgent message: "Don't drown, don't inhale water, don't choke, don't get water up your nose, don't suffocate, don't get too out breath, don't get exhausted when you're in deep water, and don't drown!...."

It's a steady stream of negativity.

For new swimmers this early warning message is deafening. It's what makes you nervous on your way to the pool. It can be so loud it drowns out your coach's well-meaning technique tips.

For experienced swimmers, it's usually background noise. But when the chop kicks up, or you battle for position in a scrum of swimmers, or take your first strokes out over the reef in unfamiliar (shark-infested?) waters, it can sit on your chest like a gorilla in a second. It doesn't really go away. And it shouldn't.

Our natural fight or flight response usually involves an increased respiration rate. But when you swim, your breathing rate is restricted and your exhalations are opposed by the resistance of water.

When you are afraid, swimming becomes twice as hard.

If you know you have trouble with breathing, you should find a coach and work on it. It is the core of being a good swimmer or triathlete. It determines the quality of your stroke, your overall efficiency and will limit the potential for gains in swim training.

A panicking swimmer who is always catching their breath is very slow. And not having any fun. Improve your breathing skills and your enjoyment of swim training will skyrocket.

### 2. Anxiety Over Being a Fearful Swimmer

No matter what anyone else says, you really shouldn't try to conquer your fear of drowning. It is an essential instinct for self-preservation, since you can't breathe water (well, not yet).

It is a myth that top open water swimmers and surfers no longer feel afraid in the ocean. Sure they do – they are just better at picking and choosing what conditions to go out in. They have a wealth of experience to draw on and know when to stay on the beach.

(Continued on page 16)