

[Here is an article I wrote for the Calgary 70.3 E-Zine](#)



The Doctrine

It's a lifestyle, not a workout.



Ironman 101

Issue #2

For our second installment of IM101, we'll continue with some overall general tips about how to approach your training, racing, and where it fits into your life granted you are doing this as a hobby and not a profession. Last month, we covered some general philosophical ways of approaching this new sport and ensuring you continue to enjoy it over the long haul. This month will be a little more of the same, but will also get slightly more focused into the actual training and racing.

Tips 1 through 5 covered last month are here, we will continue with 6 through 10 this month.

- 1.) Don't stress out.
- 2.) Don't try to train like a vet.
- 3.) Remember this is still a hobby; it needs to stay fun.
- 4.) Lane swimming is not triathlon open-water swimming.
- 5.) Learn from the right people.

- 6.) Volume does not trump quality.

Sure, you are training for a long event, no one is disputing this. It may be a Half Ironman or even a full Ironman event, but don't get in your head that all your workouts somehow have to emulate the long distances seen in the race. Volume has its place in any training schedule, but it doesn't have to dominate. The key is to be able to consistently train over and over again. Laying down a 2 hour run on Sunday because you've heard 'you need the base miles' makes absolutely no sense if your training is poor quality for the next 4 days. Don't get suckered into thinking long runs and rides are a staple that must be carried out religiously on a weekly basis. We are all different and can absorb different amounts of volume. Learn to recognize what is an acceptable amount of volume your body can recover from month after month.

7.) Short races are good. Race lots.

Too often Ironman athletes will forgo opportunities to become faster, and more powerful athletes in favour of getting in a long ride or run. These opportunities come in the way of shorter races and are pretty plentiful depending on where you live. Take advantage of short weekly time trials or short road race events offered in your community. Hop in a 5km running race. If you truly believe you need volume on a day a race is offered, then warm up, race like crazy, then tack on some miles after the race. A lot of times, a group of friends and I will ride out to a Saturday morning 20km Time Trial at easy warm-up pace, race like crazy, then continue on our ride. One rule is to never be thinking about what you are doing after the race while you are racing. This will negate most of the benefits of racing since you will probably slack off. Participating in races will also help you discover new levels of pain tolerance simply unattainable during a training session. It will also give you a chance to settle any internal disputes you may have with pushing your body into high zones of discomfort. These disputes have no place in your head come important races, and should be settled beforehand.

8.) Ever heard 'This is only a training race for me'? Don't ever say that, or more importantly, THINK that.

Continuing on from point 7, this point is purely some advice on how to mentally approach EVERY race you participate in. It is a great idea to race in events to learn specific aspects like how your body reacts to race day nutrition, holding a tight aero position, sighting in a swim, or how you deal with pain management for example, however never go in a race without committing yourself 100% to racing that race. Seems like a no brainer, but triathletes are notorious for going in a 'B' race and giving themselves excuses for failure before the gun even goes off. By no means am I saying you have to peak and taper for every race. I would even suggest training right through a lot of events you participate in, however, never use this as an excuse to not go 100% while actually competing. The moment you do this, it becomes increasingly easy to find excuses to not give it 100% during an 'A' race. Of course, professionals may be able to do this, but unless you are one, steer clear of internally or verbally stating you are just 'training through this race' to yourself or others. It will have direct consequences on the training effect you hope to gain by participating in the event in the first place.

9.) Learn to ride your bike.

I don't mean just learning to stay rubber side down while in the aerobars on a windless day riding in a straight line. I mean actually learn to be technically proficient on your bike. Spending time actually learning how corner effectively, ride with other riders at close range at race pace, and how to descend are just three examples of ways to get faster in the bike portion of a triathlon. You can acquire these skills by regularly participating in group rides with bike racers, racing in pure ITT's, and even racing in road events. The time differences between two similarly fit riders on a windy technical course, one having bike skills, and one having trained alone and not in race specific conditions, are quite staggering. Training with road racers will not only make you a better cyclist technically, but it will make you raise your cycling game significantly as well.

10.) When you feel good, and a race isn't super close, don't waste it.

Be adaptable. It is great to have a structured training plan, however your body often has different ideas of what it wants to be doing on a given day than your plan does. How many times have you heard a training partner say 'I tried to do that interval workout, but my legs just didn't have it today'. Quite often right? Well, the opposite should be true as well. As long as you are in tune with your recovery and where you are sitting in your training schedule, don't waste a day your body wants to hammer. Some days you will embark on a recovery run and feel awesome, or get in the pool for an easy swim and after the warm-up, feel like you could lay down a wicked 10X100m set. Don't become shackled to your schedule like it is written in stone. Taking advantage of non-scheduled 'good body' days can offset some of the hard sessions you miss when your body just can't show up for a scheduled tough session. Learn to be adaptable.

It's a lifestyle, not a workout,

Dr. Trev Williams

thedoctrine.ca Training to Race

speedtheoryteam.com Speed Theory Cycling Ringleader