

Introduction to the Racing Season Phase

Congratulations! You are now ready to move into the most fun part of the season – the racing phase!!! Not only will you see yourself getting faster, but this phase also allows you to be a little creative with your training.

By now, you should have a pretty good idea how your body reacts to training. Through your first 18 weeks of the program you have increased your mileage, as well as the intensity. The lactate threshold workouts you have been performing over the past 6 weeks now have you at the point where you should feel strong in your races.

No, you may not be running PR's (personal records) at this time, but you should have felt strong throughout your early season races. Perhaps like your legs were not fast enough to make your lungs tired. This is exactly where you want to be.

We have developed your heart and lungs, now it's time to bring your legs up to speed. The next 6 weeks of training is designed do just that. While we will still maintain our long runs and rides, as well as our lactate threshold workouts, these will be spread out a little more on the training schedule.

We will now incorporate some speed and intervals into the training mix. And while the duathlon training plan will end at week 24, you can extend the general format of this final 6 weeks for the remainder of your summer/fall racing season.

Designing the Racing Season Phase

The Racing Season Phase of training is probably the style of training that most of you are used to. It is really a mix of endurance training, lactate threshold training, and some speed work.

Each of these 3 types of workouts emphasizes a different energy system, and therefore none of them should be neglected. At this point, however, you have built your endurance to the point where you can back off a little on your regular long runs and rides. With less frequent long efforts, you can still maintain that endurance base for the remainder of the season.

At this point in the season, many of you have also discovered various training groups or regular train-

ing partners, so you may want to plan your training to coincide with the established workouts. If so, well, GREAT! It's much easier to train hard when you have someone to do it with. It can also help to keep you consistent.

Please read through this entire section before you begin planning your workouts. With all of the fun activities that make summer such a great season, you don't want to design a training plan, then realize that it just won't fit your lifestyle. As you read through this, make some notes about races, bike tours, camping trips, etc. that you plan to do this summer. As we go through this section, we will give tips for planing your week around upcoming races. Later in this section, we will go over race-week tapering that will get you to the starting line feeling fresh and fast!

Unlike the previous phases, where we designed the training schedule week-by-week, this time we will design the entire 6-week block at once. The first workouts we will plan are our long runs and rides.

At this point in the year, you do not NEED to do these every week – but try to get in a combined total of at least 3 per month (1 long bike and 2 long runs, or vice versa). If you have a regular group that you ride or run with, and you have the time and energy, then you may want to do one per week. The choice is really yours. Just remember, if you have a race coming up, make sure to leave enough time after your long workouts to recover.

Next, we will incorporate a tempo session into your training weeks. While the previous phase emphasized tempo training, and had you putting in 2-3 tempo workouts per week, the racing season cuts that back to just 1 per week. It is good to alternate weeks, getting in a tempo run one week, and a tempo ride the next. If you have a race scheduled for any week, just substitute the race for your tempo workout.

As we enter the racing phase, it is time to work on getting fast. Your tempo workouts will certainly help, but they can only get you so fast. Interval training, on the other hand, will get you soooooo fast!

For those of you unfamiliar with the concept of interval training – it simply means alternating periods of fast running with periods of easy jogging recovery.

Intervals are traditionally done on the track – it is measured, and in general a very controlled environment that lets you focus on your performance. A typical track interval session might be 8 x 400 meters (1 lap) with a 200 meter half-lap jogging recovery.

Intervals can also be done on the road or trail, using set periods of time, for example 10 x 1 minute with a 1 minute recovery, or running the uphill hard and the downhill easy. Intervals done off the track are known as Fartlek training – a Swedish term which means “Speed Play.” The one disadvantage with fartlek running is that the athlete has no feedback on performance, as the distances are unmeasured.

The big difference between interval training for multisport athletes and interval training for those who are single sport athletes is the number of repetitions. While an elite 5K runner may do 20-25 fast 400’s, an elite triathlete may do only 8. This is because the multisport athlete is also doing quality workouts on the bike.

Now that you have made the leap into multisport, you need to think of yourself as a multisport athlete – not a runner who also dabbles in duathlon. Making this distinction in your head will allow you to forego the biking or running-specific workouts that you did in the past and focus on becoming a competent multisport athlete.

That being said, we will now schedule our speed workouts for the week. Ideally, each of you should do one speed workout in each sport every week. For those of you who can’t handle that workload, you may want to do alternate 2 speed workouts (1 running and 1 cycling) one week and just one the next.

The length of these workouts will vary depending on your own personal fitness level. When designing your running interval workouts, total fast distance should be 1.5 – 2.5 miles. That works out to between 6 and 10 efforts of 400 meters (1 lap on the track).

Now it’s time for that creativity to kick in. Effective intervals for multisport athletes fall in the 400 - 1000 meter range, with some occasional efforts of 200 meters to develop leg turn-over. For those doing fartlek training, intervals should fall in the 1 - 5 minute range.

Cycling intervals can also be done by distance or

time, and you should shoot for 5-10 miles, or 15-30 minutes of total fast cycling per workout. Hard efforts should be in the 2 - 5 minute range, with recovery time between efforts between one-half the hard interval time up to the full time of the hard effort. If you are going by distance, keep the recovery period at one-half the hard effort distance.

Therefore, a good workout might be 10 x 2 minutes hard with a 1-2 minute recovery between each, or 6 x 1 mile with a half-mile recovery between each.

When running or cycling, always be sure to go through an easy warm-up period before beginning a speed session. And have fun designing these workouts. Ladders are great, either ascending or descending – for example, running 200 meters, 400, 600, 800, 1000 with half the distance for recovery, or cycling hard for 10 minutes, 7:00, 5:00, 4:00, 3:00, 2:00, 1:00 with half the time for recovery.

The rest of your training days each week are your choice, however I would recommend a “Brick Workout” at least once every other week, where you run immediately after cycling. Total weekly mileage should be somewhat shorter than your longest week during your base phase – remember, you are doing a lot more quality!

Race Week Tapering

Since this phase is called “Race Season” it is only appropriate to discuss what to do during the week before an event.

Typically, your last long run or ride should be done at least a week before your race, therefore if you will be racing on a Saturday morning, you should not do a long run or ride any later than the Saturday before the race.

Likewise, tempo training should not be done in the 5 days before the event – especially if you are over age 40 or have learned through your training that you don’t recover from hard workouts very quickly.

Things are a little less rigid with speed workouts. You will often have a great race if you get in a somewhat short speed session 4 days before the race – this doesn’t mean to cram in all sorts of fast stuff up until 4 days out. A single speed session for the week is adequate.

During the last 3 days before a race, you want to gradually cut back on your mileage, until the day before the race when you will do just a short and easy run or ride.

Remember, you will not make yourself any faster during the last week before a race – but if you're stupid, you can make yourself a whole lot slower.