

Training Plan Outline

#1 Goal-Setting

Every season begins with a goal. When writing a goal, be as detailed and specific as you can. You want to avoid setting goals that are out of your control. For example, a goal that says Adam wants to complete an Ironman in less than 8.5 hours might seem specific, but it is not under your control because weather, mechanical failures, injury, etc. could prevent Adam from obtaining that goal despite potentially having the fitness to achieve that time. Stick to goals that YOU can control.

#2 Race Schedule

You will want to look ahead at what races you are interested in and select those that best align with your goals. The most popular time for Ironman and marathon events in North America are between early September and mid-November. This allows the bulk of training to be done under better weather conditions (aka less interruptions).

PRIORITIZING

Now that you have had some time to think about what races you might want to do for the season you should prioritize. Begin by ranking your races as either A, B, or C, to help follow the following guidelines:

A Race– Your biggest race(s) of the year. These race(s) include one to two weeks of taper before competition. These race(s) also require at least one to two weeks of recovery afterward from the intense physical and mental exertion. Most people can only complete optimally in three A races in a season.

B Race – These races are intended to help you boost your fitness and skills for improving your performance on an A race. Do not expect to rest a lot before a B race nor expect to set any personal bests at a B race.

C Race – These races are typically smaller and intended to be just for fun. There is not much rest before or after a C event. These races are intended to improve skill through practice and race simulation.

			Run	Run	Long	Bike	Bike	Long	Swim	Swim	Strength	Total Time
	Monday	Races	Percent	Miles	Run	Percent	Miles	Bike (miles)	Percent	Yds	# of sessions	Estimated (hr)
6	8/2/2021		70%	28	14	80%	160	100	80%	8000	2	10.5
5	8/9/2021		90%	36	20	90%	180	80	65%	6500	2	10.3
4	8/16/2021	B-Race	65%	26	14	100%	200	100	60%	6000	0	8.7
3	8/23/2021		65%	26	14	75%	150	80	75%	7500	2	9.3
2	8/30/2021		50%	20	10	60%	120	50	60%	6000	1	7.0
1	9/6/2021	A-Race	30%	12	26	15%	30	112	30%	4300	0	3.4

#3 Weekly Training Time

You will need to determine how many hours you are able and willing to train per week. For most amateur triathletes this number is around 8 to 12 hours per week with the potential for more hours if training for a full Ironman. As a professional triathlete I would train on average 20-25 hours per week, with some heavier weeks being 35-40 hours. Usually the highest volume weeks occur 2-7 weeks before an A race. Keep in mind that during this time you will be very busy and tired from all the training. Do not schedule an A-race at a time when your most critical training comes during the busiest time of your work. For example, when we had our 1st child on July 28, I did not sign up for any major marathon events that fall. Had I done Chicago or Twin Cities in early October, I would have been stressing over lack of sleep and not getting my critical miles in.

Whatever weekly amount you choose you should consider your overall wellness. Remember, if you take time for training, that time has to come from somewhere else. If it comes from quality time with your spouse, children and friends, then you might not find the freedom and support in the sport that you need to be happy and successful.

#4 Strength Training

Research has shown athletes who utilize strength training will increase their performance on race day and also reduce their chances for injury. In my own personal experience and with athletes I coach this is definitely true. While it is easy to say this, most athletes and coaches struggle to know what to do when they actually get to the gym. Perhaps even going to the gym is not the best form of strength training either. Here are different areas of strength to consider:

- Corrective Exercises – The goal of corrective exercises is to correct any muscle imbalances, inflexibilities or proprioceptive limitations an athlete might have.
- Stabilization – These exercises are intended to improve the stabilizers, not the prime movers. This phase of training is designed to not just improve the strength of the stabilizers, but more importantly the neurological communication between the stabilizers and prime movers.
- Strength Endurance – These exercises are intended to be used only after adequate stabilization has been established. These exercises focus more on the prime movers with the intention of improving their endurance. The goal here is to improve the number and efficiency of slow-twitch muscle fibers.
- Power – These exercises are intended to be used sparingly and wisely. Exercises intended to produce power use heavier weights or greater resistance.

In my experience it is important to have a variety of all four types of strength training. I aim to incorporate elements of them all into my strength training plan for athletes. You can find examples of some of these essential exercises for endurance athletes by going to my [Youtube channel](#).

Below you will see an example of one phase of training an athlete would begin 12-weeks into the training cycle.

PHASE 4	Week	Sets Reps	Note	Lift 1	Lift 2	Lift 3	Lift 4	Lift 5	Lift 6
	1	3 x 15	Complete all sets before moving on to the next exercise. Weight should be 60 - 70% of max	Step Up (non reactive)	Hang Cleans	Stability ball bench press	Hip Extension (GHR)	Hip Flex (incline)	Renegade Row
3 x 60s (20s rest)		Complete 3 sets of each exercise before moving on to the next exercise	Kettle bell front squat	Single Leg Dead Lift	Pushups on MedBall	DB Bunny Hops	Bent rows with dumbbells	Goblet lateral lunge	
2	3 x 20	Complete all sets before moving on to the next exercise. Weight should be 70-80% of max	Frog Hop (resisted)	Hip Flex (resisted)	Knee over toe (box)	DB Lunges (Paw)	Three way shoulder routine	Knee to elbow plank	
	3 x 60s (20s rest)	Complete 3 sets of each exercise before moving on to the next exercise	TRX (Pistol Squats)	Stability ball hamstring curls	TRX (low rows)	TRX (IYT)	TRX (bicep curls)	Sprint Resisted	
3	3 x 20	Complete all sets before moving on to the next exercise. Weight should be 70-80% of max	Step up (reactive)	Hang Cleans	Stability ball bench press	Hip Extension (GHR)	Hip Flex (incline)	Renegade Row	
	3 x 75s (20s rest)	Complete 3 sets of each exercise before moving on to the next exercise	Kettle bell front squat	Single Leg Dead Lift (Bosu Ball)	Pushups on MedBall	DB Bunny Hops	Bent rows with dumbbells	Goblet lateral lunge	
4	3 x 15	Complete all sets before moving on to the next exercise. Weight should be 80-90% of max	Frog Hop (resisted)	Hip Flex on Box (resisted)	Knee over toe (small box)	DB Lunges (Paw)	Three way shoulder routine	Knee to elbow plank	
	3 x 75s (20s rest)	Complete 3 sets of each exercise before moving on to the next exercise	TRX (Pistol Squats)	Stability ball hamstring curls	TRX (low rows)	TRX (IYT)	TRX (bicep curls)	Sprint Resisted	

#5 Workout Variety

The human body tends to break down if the training is monotonous (aka redundant). It is important that an athlete doesn't do the same type of workouts over and over. This can lead to muscle atrophy, imbalance and injury. The body likes variety. I used to follow a traditional pattern of periodization. The basic theory behind this method is that an athlete goes through cycles or periods of training. A general format is to begin with base or endurance training. This period is followed by more intervals and less volume. As the athlete approaches the A-race the training becomes more race specific, intense and reduced in volume.

Over the past 10 years of writing workouts for myself and athletes I have adopted a different approach. I no longer use the periodization model of training. After reading the book "Running" by Frans Bosch and Ronald Klomp, I began using the pace calculator shown below. Beginning with a time trial, such as a 9/3 test, 5k or 10k race, I can determine approximately what a "mile" time or VDOT would be for an athlete. I use this predictor to then set paces based on varying levels of intensity.

For example, for the athlete shown below (VDOT = 53, Best mile = 5:50) I would suggest running at an easy pace of 8:20 minutes on recovery days. Tempo or threshold runs would range from 7:04 to 7:31 pace depending on the distance. For interval work, such as repeat 800 or 1200 meters, this athlete would target 6:18 to 6:40 pace. For shorter distances of 200 or 400 meters this athlete would run at 5:58 or faster.

What I don't do:

In a traditional 21-week periodization model the athlete would begin with 6 weeks of mostly running at easy or threshold paces (yellow). For the next 6 weeks the athlete would switch to threshold and interval training (yellow and green) paces. In the next 6 weeks the athlete would transition to interval and repetition pace training (green and blue). In the final 2 weeks of taper the athlete might only do repetition (blue) paces on workout days.

What I do:

In my experience I have had better results when incorporating ALL of these colors or paces into my weekly regiment. Some of my best marathons came when I also felt like I could run a personal best in the mile. Variety is necessary and I try to incorporate a lot of paces into a 7-day period of training. Regular testing 3-4 weeks apart allows me to continually adjust these paces as an athlete improves.

Name	VDOT	Mile (predicted)		
	53	5:50	%Mile	Description
Endurance 1	400	2:05	65-75%	Slowest Tempo. Active Recovery. 5-40km. Fat metabolism only.
	800	4:10		
	1600	8:20		
Endurance 2	400	1:52	75-80%	Middle Tempo. 5-30km. Fat and Glycogen.
	800	3:45		
	1600	7:31		
Endurance 3	400	1:46	80-85%	Fastest Tempo. 4-15km. Glycogen only.
	800	3:32		
	1600	7:04		
Interval 1	400	1:40	85-90%	Less intensity. Shorter pauses (<2 minutes). 50-800m. <8km total
	800	3:20		
	1200	5:00		
	1600	6:40		
Interval 2	400	1:34	90-95%	More intensity. Longer pauses (<2 minutes). 100-800m. <5km total.
	800	3:09		
	1200	4:44		
	1600	6:18		
Repetition	200	0:44	95-100%	Highest intensity. Full recovery. 800-3000m. <6000m total.
	400	1:29		
	800	2:59		
	1200	4:29		
	1600	5:58		

Lastly, when incorporating all three levels of pace into one week, this can become exhaustive during high volume weeks. To prevent overreaching, overtraining, injury or burnout, I have had to incorporate heavy down weeks or rest weeks into training. For example, an athlete might complete two weeks at 80 - 100% volume followed by one week at 50% volume. These heavy down weeks allow athletes to adapt from all the accumulated physical and mental stress in training. [Excerpt of Ironman athletes training plan.](#)