

Island, or fifty yard sprints in the pool. The last phase of the season is the competitive phase and looks very much like Phase Three except less distance and slightly less intensity on weeks before and after your race.

5. Don't "over-taper" for races. Backing off a little before competition will make you feel rested and eager to race. Resting a lot before competition will make you feel lethargic and prone to injury and sickness.
6. Reconsider weight or resistance training sessions. Remember that every minute you are pumping iron, you could be out riding your bike or working on your swim stroke and those sport specific workouts will make the biggest difference in your performance. However, I understand the appeal and benefits of weight training. I simply suggest that you modify your gym routine to include circuit training that focuses mainly on your "core" and takes no more than 30 minutes three times per week.

Bricks and slug juice

Any multi-sport athlete trying to move beyond beginner status will be faced with the necessity of doing two workouts in one day. For this reason, busy triathletes have what they call "brick workouts". These training sessions usually consist of a bike ride followed immediately by a run where your legs feel like Jell-O and your form resembles the

Tin-man trotting down the Yellow Brick Road. The idea is to mimic the back-to-back (or back-to-back-to-back) nature of triathlons. Many triathletes live for their once or twice weekly Bricks and believe that their suffering is surely making them stronger. However, the only evidence bricks have any real benefit is purely anecdotal. Just because a workout is hard or makes you feel like slug juice doesn't mean it is good for you.

I strongly believe that one should first get used to doing two workouts, one in the morning and one in the evening, before combining them into one long "brick" workout. Bricks are excellent race simulation, preparing you mentally for the uncomfortable reality of changing from one sport to another, but they are hard on your body and not particularly good at increasing your performance. Your body will get stronger more quickly if you spread the workouts apart and focus on making them all quality efforts and not long drawn-out death-marches. Also, if you always run at the end of a brick you will always have crappy runs. This type of cross training is supposed to be easier on you body than just running, but athletes get injured from them since the bike riding will weaken quads. My advice to avoid this is to mix up the order of events. Now, when my teams start doing these brick workouts, we do our running before cycling. You are much less likely to get injured from a run/bike or bike/swim brick. Lastly, bricks are most useful later in the season as you tune up for a race so there is no need to rush things.

Other common mistakes and cures

There are some other common mistakes runners make as they start cycling and swimming. The first one is pushing big gears on the bike. Runners may feel more comfortable "pumping" the pedals on the bike because it feels like the rhythmic pounding of their Sauconys on the sidewalk. The chain-rings on your bike are round so you need to learn to turn the pedals in circles. Keep things smooth by trying to apply pressure to the pedals over as long an arc as possible. Try lifting the pedal as well as pushing on it. For the first couple of months on your bike, don't put the chain in the largest chain-ring up front by the pedals. A smaller gear you will force you to raise your pedaling cadence up to 80 rotations per minute or more. The higher the better. I often see people riding down the Burke Gillman Trail with one foot turning the pedals and the other flying free to the side of the bike. That is a great test for seeing how smooth your pedal stroke is. If you can almost pedal smoothly with one leg, you can do it easily with two.

The next mistake I see is playing "wall tag" in the pool. Some folks swim to the end of the pool, touch, swim back, touch, and repeat endlessly. Don't just "swim laps". Work on skills first and fitness later. In the beginning, swim only two or four lengths at a time then rest for 15 or 20 seconds. When I see people swimming lap after lap I see their form deteriorate in the first five minutes and then they are simply practicing bad swimming for the rest of the workout. I strongly



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