

## SPEEDY TRANSITIONS

A speedy and organized transition can take minutes off a triathlete's time at any race, whether it's a sprint, Olympic, or ultradistance. A smooth transition could be the difference in winning and not even placing in the top 3 of any age group, and more than once I have seen an Ironman slot go to the finisher who had a slower swim, bike and run, but *faster transitions* than the next guy. You won't have a fast transition simply by reading these tips, however. You must practice!

Master these techniques to improve your transitions.

### SETTING UP TRANSITION AREA

- Arrive at the race site at least an hour prior to the start of the race. You will need to get body marked, get your race packet (unless they do this the day before) and check out the course. Don't rush the set up.
- If they allow you to take the bike out of transition, go for a short ride on the course to warm up.
- *Set up your bike in the gears you want to start out in* before securing it to the bike rack.
- Mark your spot – even if you just commit it to memory. A bright swim cap placed over your seat helps your bike stand out among the sea of bikes. You'll still have to have a general idea of where your bike is. Avoid using balloons or flags as this system creates chaos if everyone does it. Another discreet marking system would be to use a bright unique towel, or simply counting how many racks you are from where you enter transition.
- Spread a towel on ground close to the bike and organize your race gear on this towel. (NOTE: Ironman races have different rules about the transition area, and may not allow anything in transition or might require that everything fit in a mile crate). Place the bike shoes under your helmet with sunglasses in the helmet, helmet straps out. Running shoes, hat, and race number should also be organized in a neat pile. An extra water bottle and gels or other nutritional needs can also be placed on the towel. Be considerate of your fellow racers and make a plan of exit with your bike and equipment.
- Walk through the transition area a couple of times so you can see where you enter and exit for the swim, bike, and run.

### SWIM-TO-BIKE TRANSITION TIPS

Start unzipping your wetsuit as soon as you stand up to run out of water (but not before you are ankle deep). If it's a short run to the bike, get the wetsuit down to your waist as you're running to the bike. Once at the bike pull it down to the ankles. Stand on the wetsuit while peeling it off the ankles. A pre-swim spray of Body Glide will help the wetsuit slide off easier, and as long as this is your wetsuit and not a rental, you can cut the wetsuit at the widest part of your calf and the feet will slip out when you take the wetsuit off.

For a longer swim-to-bike run, take the wetsuit off at the water. It will be less tiring than running in the wetsuit!

Under the wetsuit you will be wearing the tri shorts and tri top that you will race in. Dress from the top down, undress from the bottom up. In other words: helmet (clipped), sunglasses, bike shoes. Once the helmet and shoes are on, jog the bike out of transition to the mounting area.

Find a clear spot WELL PAST THE MOUNT LINE and safely clip in. Don't mount right at the mount line – it's CHAOS there! Don't try a fancy mount that you haven't mastered by practicing dozens of times.

### **BIKE-TO-RUN TRANSITION TIPS**

As you approach the transition area, start spinning (easy gears) on the bike. Also, stand for a few seconds as this will get your legs ready for run. You can slip your feet out of the shoes as you approach the transition area. *But do not do this unless you've practiced this technique.*

Once dismounted (make a note of where the dismount line is), jog your bike to your spot in transition. Once again, you don't have to do this right AT the dismount line – you are dismount before to avoid the chaos. Just to be clear, you can't MOUNT before the MOUNT line, but you can mount well after. You can't DISMOUNT after the dismount line, but you can dismount before.

You should also practice running with your bike before the race.

DO NOT unclip your helmet until you rack your bike. Once at your spot, rack the bike and take the bike shoes off first (you'll be more stable), then helmet off. (I have seen athletes run out of transition with their helmets on). Do not sit down. Slip your running shoes on. Powder works really well in the shoes if you're not wearing socks. Also, use lace locks, elastic shoe laces, or Velcro speed straps for your racing shoes. These will eliminate tying your shoes. Jog out of transition putting on your hat and race belt. This has your race number secured to it. Keep moving as you dress. Start the first few minutes of the run easy then pick it up to your race pace.

These transition techniques, when practiced in training, can improve your total race time by two to eight minutes. A good time to practice these is during brick workouts or during a recovery week.