

Learning from Success

by Gordo Byrn

In 2003, I had a chance to hear Jack Daniels speak at a swimming. Daniels is a favorite of the coaches here at Endurance Corner and we model much of our physiological approach based on what we've learned from him.

My two favorite Daniels tips are:

- Trust success; Question defeat.
- If you want to train faster then prove it by racing faster.

At the Boise 70.3 I went far faster than I thought possible and I've been trying to figure out the lessons to help me as an athlete and coach.

But first a reality check...

...at half IMs, even when I go "fast" I am still 20-30 minutes behind the best men. So I need to keep my personal performance in context. That said, I'm performing well relative to myself. Why?

Application of Effort - At Boise, I started at the back of the field so had a chance to watch how 1,000+ athletes choose to race. While you are probably racing just fine, your competition is wasting a ton of effort -- quite possibly because they are trying too hard, too early.

Whether you perform, crack, cramp, crash... it's just not that big a deal! When you are stressed, you are tense. Tension ruins our athletic economy and sends the wrong signals to our bodies.

You've likely read our advice on ***going fast when the race is slow***. In fast racing, also remember to ***let the other athletes be strong***. The faster you go, the more benefit there is from letting another athlete help maintain the tempo. Don't show your strength until half way through the run, at the earliest.

There are plenty of ways to save mental/physical energy by letting other athletes be strong. If you're racing with me and want to drag me to a turn buoy; blast yourself downhill at 35mph; lead for a couple miles of run tempo... I will not challenge you. I'll bank little bits of energy for when I might need them.

Riding through the field in Boise, I recognized two essential skills for you master:

1. A tight, stable, zero-watt tuck on the bike.
2. How to make a 90-degree corner at speed with your chest pointing down.

I was rolling up free speed by applying the above tips. Learning these skills, then scaling across an ironman, will give you the best shot to run an amazing marathon (or simply being able to run after eight hours of exercise!).

As for my own performance, so far I've come up with:

- **Freshness Counts** - Lately, I've sacrificed training load to be able to swim really fast three days per week. When my top end disappears, I freshen up for a couple days.
- **Low Deviation Training** - Coming into Boise, I didn't do much bike/run volume but I had several weeks where I was training close to three hours per day. I also made sure that I ran nearly every day and rode at least three times per week.
- **Stress Kills Speed** - I'm fortunate to be a sweet spot with my work, training and attitude. My family, my wife, my team and I have created a harmonious life situation. Because of Monica's support, even with the newborn, I've been able to sleep well and nap when required. At the end of the flight up to Boise (with my two-year old daughter), the lady next to me commented that I was the most patient man she'd ever seen. My patience comes from doing less, but doing well.

Summing up what seems to be working:

- Backing off while I can still train through my fatigue
- Remembering that "little" workouts count
- Choose to be under scheduled most days.

Train Smart
