



Going Long

Most triathletes will wonder at some-time about “Going Long” with either a half or full Ironman distance. It is entirely achievable but it is likely to be a big step-up from sprints and standard distance events. Good planning is essential, with the physical training only being part of it. Here are few tips.

- Check you diary** - Most people will need at least six months to train plus you won't want to be too busy for a week or two before or after the event. Also, events can sell out well in advance, so don't assume you can enter at the last minute.
- Sort your finances** - Events can be very expensive (especially the branded ones like Ironman and Challenge). Unless it is near home you will need accommodation for the event (often inflated due to demand) and possibly a reconnaissance trip. Also, factor in several pairs of running shoes, servicing and repairs to your bike, nutrition and café stops on your training rides
- Manage your boss** - There will be a few weeks before the event when you need to do a lot of training. A bit of flexibility at work can help a lot.
- Prepare your partner, family and friends** - As well as spending a lot of time training you will become a bit obsessed with the overall planning. This may not be a reason for a relationship to breakdown but it will exaggerate any existing problems.
- Check cut off times** - With good planning anyone can go long. However, whilst you may be happy to just finish no matter how long it takes, the organisers will not. It is no good relying on your running ability if you do not make the swim or bike cut-off, because you will not be allowed to continue. Be realistic before you enter, and maybe consider delaying for a year if that will help.
- Love your bike** - You are going to spend a long time on your bike during training and on the day. Reliability and comfort as essential. Get you bike serviced early in training and plan to have it serviced again a couple of weeks before the event. Whilst we all subscribe to the N+1 rule for bikes, getting a new bike immediately before a race is not a good idea.
- Stock-pile running shoes** - Manufacturers have a habit of discontinuing models. The last thing you want to do is swap to a new one for the event. Better to have a couple of pairs in hand to avoid this.

- Get used to early mornings** - Most events start fairly early, so by the time you have factored in time to eat breakfast and make your way to the start you can be sure of an early start. Also, training in the early morning is a very useful way of cramming some extra hours in. You will fall asleep in front of the TV every evening, but you won't be missing much.
- See a physio now** - It is fairly certain that you will pick up some injuries during training. A physio can be a great help but the good ones have very full diaries and if you can get an appointment it is not great to see them for the first time after you have got injured.
- Clothes for all weathers** - Particularly in the UK, you have to plan for all types of weather whilst making sure you are comfortable (see chafing below). Multiple layers is the answer, including items such as arm and leg warmers, gilets and buffs. Also, you need to decide if you will use a tri-suit to save time in transition or whether you will be changing to 'proper' cycling and running gear as appropriate.
- Avoid chaffing** - Many people can share horror stories, and offer to show you the photos, of damage caused by friction between clothing and skin when cycling and running long distances. This can affect you during training and on race day. For most people it is worth taking extra time to put on proper cycling and running clothes at transitions. If you are going to do the whole thing in a tri-suit you definitely want to try this in training. Investing in some anti-chafing cream is a good investment.
- Nutrition, nutrition, nutrition** - Working out what to eat and drink on the day is likely to be one of your biggest worries. There will be feed stations but relying on these is a big risk. The main options are to rely on gels, eat 'proper food' or a bit of both. Whatever you decide you really need to practice it during your training.
- Write a race week plan** - Committing your plan to paper means you are far more likely to stick to it. It should include your activities on the days, right down to what time you will have breakfast on race day and what you will eat.
- Practice your race face** - There will be plenty of photos taken on the day. You won't always feel great but you will want to look good. The reality is you will go through some dark times during the day. Everyone does, but you will get through them and you will finish, get the medal and bore people about it for months to come. But you will have earned the right.

Oh, and don't forget on top of all of the above you will need a training plan!