

Yeah,... but I rocked the bike!

I recently ran into a young athlete that I work with. (Full disclosure: I work with him on swimming technique only) and asked him about Kansas 70.3 which he just completed. I asked him how he thought he did.

“Well, I did ok. I had some stomach issues. And my run wasn’t really what I was hoping for. But did you see my bike split? I rocked the bike!” he said.

I can’t tell you how often I hear this type of race report from triathletes. For some reason it seems that more people care about their bike split than the overall race result. And nothing causes more problems for a triathlete than going too hard on the bike. Nothing.

I have developed 10 racing principles (you can see them here <http://www.trismartusa.com/philosophy/TriSmart%20racing%20principles%20poster%20v2.pdf>) for my athletes to follow and I think this young man violated at least 4 of them.

Principle # 2 *Triathlon is one race with one time. You must look at the entire event and pace yourself so as to minimize your time. The time you spend in the transitions*

count as much as your time swimming, biking, and running.

This triathlete finished almost 30 minutes behind his expected time. Truly he cared too much about his bike split and it ended up destroying his race.

Principle #6 *Manage the pace on the bike. Most triathletes push too hard, too early on the bike and pay the price on the run.*

This triathlete hammered his bike split, posting a time quite close to what he would have done in an open time trial. Of course the pace seems too easy in the beginning of the race. You are fresh and rested then. That is why I require my long course triathletes to use a powermeter. It keeps them honest and takes subjective pacing out of the equation. Did this triathlete pay the price on the run? You bet he did. He was hoping to run a 1:30 half and ended up running over 2 hours instead (as an aside, an athlete I coach, almost 50 years older than this young man, had the *same* run split.) The young man ended up walking most of the race.

Principle # 7 *Nutrition. Good nutrition will allow you to perform at your peak. Bad nutrition will ruin your day.*

This young man complained that he could not get any food down on the bike then tried sucking down tons of GU s on the run. He fell apart until the food starting kicking in and was able to run the last mile or two at a decent pace. He knew he had a food problem. What he didn’t do know was that he inability to ingest his food was directly related to his high pacing on the bike.

Principle #9 *Don’t do anything on race day that you haven’t done in practice before.*

This young man did not practice taking in nutrition at his race pace to see if his body would absorb it. He did not practice biking at that intensity and then running afterwards to see if he could sustain that pacing. A race can be an unforgiving place to practice.