



We know you try hard . . . Now TriSmart!

What are you thinking during a race?

Hopefully you're not trying to figure out what you should eat and drink – you've done that BEFORE the race, you've practiced it so you know it will work, and you're just FOLLOWING your plan during the race. Maybe you need to set an alarm on your watch to remind you to drink or eat – that works well for some folks.

You can make a note to yourself about HR pacing and/or nutrition and tape it to your stem/aerobars or write it on your wrist where you can see it from the aero position (use permanent marker so it won't wash off in the swim).

If you're like me, you get spacey while racing – you don't want to have to make decisions – just do what the note says and have your plan SUPER memorized so you won't forget it or get confused.

Hopefully during the race you're not trying to figure out how fast you should go and when – with your HR monitor on and paying attention to how you feel – you will be following the pacing plan you laid out BEFORE the race.

- I have told many of you that I think it is best NOT to look at your time throughout the race – sometimes that is hard. If the time is good it can be motivating, but if it isn't what you wanted it is HARD to put that out of your head. Some of my best races have been races where I NEVER saw my time until I finished. When I have not stayed in the moment at races and started thinking about NON-constructive things – that is when the race has gone poorly.

Hopefully you're not worried about what is going to happen in T1 and T2 – you've practiced your transitions and before the race you clarified where you are going so there is no need to be nervous about that! (ask me for my write-ups on transitions if you don't have them).

During a race our goal is to think happy, fun, positive thoughts (if that is working) such as:

- "I'm going fast!"
- "I'm relaxed"
- "I'm strong"
- "I'm moving smoothly (thought the water, through my pedal stroke, while running)"

When you start to feel or think the following:

- "I'm tired",
- "I'm not going fast enough"
- "I can't catch that person", etc. (yucky negative thoughts!)

THEN START focusing on your form and technique! It's hard to just tell ourselves to think happy, positive thoughts, BUT we can take our minds away from the negative thoughts if we have something else to think about and focus on. That something else is our form and technique!

During the various swim, bike and run sessions I've done with most of you, we've discussed MANY technique and good form focus points. Start at the tip of your head and work your way down through your body.

- Is the crown of my head being pulled up by a puppet string to lengthen my neck and slightly lower my chin (feeling of a long neck)?
 - Is my pelvis neutral or tucked (as if I'm trying to flatten my back against the floor while doing sit-ups).
 - Are my shoulders around, back and down my back?
 - Are my hands relaxed?
- Etc. etc.

Often by the time you're done thinking about some of these form focus points, you'll start feeling strong, more relaxed, smoother, happier AND then you can go back to thinking THOSE happy thoughts (strong, smooth, fast, etc) – UNTIL those negative thoughts come back AND THEN it is BACK to your form!

IT IS CRITICAL that you stay in the moment. This is easier said than done! Don't think about the upcoming run! Don't think about the swim you just finished. The beauty of triathlon is that it's like 3 races in one. If your swim is NOT what you wanted it to be – MOVE ON! Follow your bike plan and do the best bike you are capable of! If your bike is not what you wanted then only the run matters now! Go for it on the run!

My husband is currently reading a book about Navy Seal training. The author, a navy seal, says the thing they focused on the MOST in all their training was to ONLY think about the task they were doing at that very moment and NOT to think about what is coming next. This is one of the reasons why Yoga is helpful to triathlon. In Yoga you focus on your breathing all the time. This helps you stay in the moment and not let your mind wander – good practice for keeping your focus and staying relaxed!

Trust your training – you are capable of the plan you created and goals you've set (we work on being realistic) – Your body will do what your mind tells it to (within reason of course). If your mind says "I can't" then the body WILL listen. If your mind says – "I feel GREAT" – you do and will feel great.

Just as it can be dangerous to look at your time throughout the race, it is also dangerous to look at your speed on the bike. REMEMBER – wind and hills make us go slower! I try NOT to look at my speed on the bike except when I'm going down hill and I know it will be FAST! I focus on my heart rate and my perceived effort and my technique and STAYING relaxed and finishing my nutrition.

During the run I DO look at my mile splits because that helps me pace myself and sometimes my HR values are not as reliable during the run, but if I'm disappointed with a particular mile split that can be hard (the time focus wants to take over my mind!) THEN I have to focus on my form to get myself to pick it up the next mile.

Lastly, it is hard when someone is ahead of us that we think should NOT be. Well, thinking about that is NOT going to help YOUR race. Think about YOUR race and you will do the best you can. If you can beat that person that day then you will do it only by keeping your mind on the right things!

Again, this is all very hard. I can do it sometimes and not other times. It is easier when we are rested and trained for a race. A great trick is to have a previous wonderful swim, bike and run workout or part of a race that you can focus on when the going gets rough. Maybe you did a GREAT run recently – think about that while you're running. Visualize it – pretend you're in the middle of that great workout again. Think deeply about what that great workout felt like. Same for the swim and bike – you can swim, bike and run strongly (OF COURSE it is all relative to you

own abilities and THAT IS ALL THAT MATTERS). It is a great practice to visualize your race frequently beforehand. See yourself swimming strongly and confidently. See yourself sailing through T1 and working the bike just as you planned. See yourself smoothly through T2 and imagine what it's like to get in your running rhythm and build your speed to finish the run stronger or at least as strong as you started it.

Many of us question whether or not we have pushed ourselves as hard as we could have after a race. We think we are not tough enough to make it hurt. Each of us is better at this some days than other days. But, if you have a plan to help your mind help your body you will have more successes. Being hard on yourself usually doesn't improve your performance. Instead encourage yourself. We are all our own worst enemies sometimes. With each success AND failure we can improve.

Good luck out there Athletes!

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