

How to achieve your best race results-the smart way!

By Kim Boere

Whether you are a beginner or a seasoned athlete looking to improve your race times, peaking at your race is a satisfying way to complete a race or season of races. Although genetics can help athletes, efficient and structured training will ensure that you are reaching your full potential on the course.

Often we believe that a special nutritional supplement, expensive bike or fancy running shoes will give us the best advantage when in fact it is much cheaper and more beneficial than that! With solid goals in mind and expanding your expectations realistically, you can have your best season yet!

For example, let's talk about the swim in the triathlon - poor swim fitness will lead you to a poor race performance, especially on the run. If you're not getting out of the water "fresh", the accumulated fatigue, will slow you down later for the run. Even if you are a good runner, if you're already fatigued from the swim and/or bike, you will not perform as well as you think. Don't blame your running fitness; blame instead, your swim fitness!

With consistent, progressive training as well as a good analysis of yourself (weaknesses) and determining your target race-you can reach a personal best whether it is in Triathlon or any other endurance event.

So, how do you do it?

Most improvements, especially the biggest improvements, can be made in areas of weakness but work on keeping a philosophy of getting great at your strengths and adequate at your weaknesses. This can help ensure that you aren't wearing out on an area that you may not make large gains and losing your already established strengths. An example is an instance where your weakness is swimming and your strength is in cycling. Solutions could be getting to the pool regularly to work on your technique, developing more strength on the bike or shedding some excess weight to improve your running ability to improve your overall time.

Focus on the foundation and not excessive time on endurance. What we lack the most is what we lose as we get older—Mobility, Speed and Strength/Power. As you age you're not getting slower due to lack of endurance.

Eating right and fueling up well will also make a big difference. Many athletes don't pay necessary attention to nutrition during workouts. Fueling properly during workouts will also benefit your recovery. ([Get more out of Carbohydrates](#), [Start a Food Journal and Watch Your Endurance Grow](#))

Talking percentages

You might be wondering: how much difference can an improvement of one percent actually make? Over the course of a race lasting two or more hours, it can get you across the finish line a lot sooner than you might expect. For example:

- 1% improvement in a 2:30-hour Olympic distance triathlon equates to over a minute quicker.
- 1% improvement in a 5:15-hour half-Ironman equates to over five minutes quicker.
- 1% improvement in a 13:30-hour Ironman race equates to an improvement of just over eight minutes.

Now think of how much time you'll improve if you can make a 1% gain in more than one area.

If you're a beginner, you could see your speed improve by 10% or more over each training session in a month. Conversely, a seasoned racer may find it takes a winter's worth of training to make a 3% gain.

From an equipment perspective, a good bike fitting that helps you feel more comfortable, more powerful and more aerodynamic could save you over a minute in a 25 mile bike leg. If you combine that with more confidence on the swim, great nutrition and hydration, and losing 4lbs of fat, you could save up to 7 minutes.

Everyone can benefit from a little more structure and planning. The right approach to your goals and program can not only improve your time but also how you recover in the end. Ultimately if you want to race faster then start with smart training and you'll succeed!

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