

Blast the Competition!

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You know who you want to beat. Your friend, your sister-in-law, *that guy* that always seems to win your age group. The only way you're going to beat them is to better yourself. Here's five ways to do just that and blast the competition this summer.

Devour Hills

If it were possible to swim up hills, we'd tell you to do that. That's how great hill workouts are. No matter what your current ability level is, riding and running up hills will make you better. There's no better workout.

For both cycling and running, find hills in your area that take you anywhere from 30 seconds to five minutes to ride and run up. Sandwiched between a good warm-up and cool-down, work up to a set of 15-30 minutes of work intervals.

For example, 16 X 1', 8 X 3', 6 X 5'. Ride/run up the hill at an intensity that is +/- eight BPM of your average heart rate in a 12-mile or 30-minute time-trial (for cycling) and a three-mile time trial or recent 5-k race (for running). For example, if you averaged 160 BPM in a recent 12-mile time trial for cycling, do your work intervals at 152-168 BPM. Go hard, but pace yourself, parcel out your effort, for the whole set of intervals, just as you would do in a race. You want to get as far up the hill, or further up the hill, on your last interval as you did on your first interval.

For the rest interval, for cycling, coast down the hill practicing your descending skills. For running, run easy down the hill, staying light on your feet.

For cycling, *stay seated* for most intervals and most hill workouts. But mix in some standing climbing for variety. For example, you could do 8 X 3', where you stayed seated for the first 2' 45" of each climb, then stood for the last 15". Or for 16 X 1', you could stay seated for all intervals except for numbers 4, 8, 12, and 16, for which you'd stand. Mix things up, but keep climbing those hills.

Do the Best Bricks

Make your bricks perfect race preparation. Most importantly, do portions of them at race intensity. Too many athletes do their bricks and other long workouts at too easy of an intensity (and thus at slow speeds/paces). If you train easy and slow, how are you going to be able to go hard and fast in a race? Instead, start putting some snap into your bricks. It will boost your race-readiness and the speed you can hold in races.

Here's a sample progression of bricks used to train for a ½ Ironman.

10 weeks out	Ride 40 miles, last 10 at race intensity. Run 6 miles, first 1 at race intensity.
9 weeks out	Ride 40 miles, last 20 at race intensity. Run 6 miles, first 3 at race intensity.
8 weeks out	Ride 40 miles, last 30 at race intensity. Run 6 miles, first 5 at race intensity.
7 weeks out	Rest week, no brick
6 weeks out	Ride 50 miles, last 20 at race intensity. Run 8 miles, first 3 at race intensity.
5 weeks out	Ride 50 miles, last 30 at race intensity. Run 8 miles, first 5 at race intensity.
4 weeks out	Ride 50 miles, last 40 at race intensity. Run 8 miles, first 7 at race intensity.
3 weeks out	Taper phase, no brick
2 weeks out	Taper phase, no brick
Race week	Taper phase, no brick

To make the most of your bricks:

1. Keep the distances modest and focus on intensity. Really long, really slow rides are generally a waste of time. For example, a brisk 50-mile ride is better preparation for a ½ Ironman than a 75-mile ride that more resembles touring than racing.
2. Thoroughly practice your race nutrition.
3. As much as possible, do them on courses similar to the race you are training for and in conditions similar to what you expect on race day.
4. Use your equipment similarly to how you will use it in the race (except for race wheels; save them for the race and a few rides in your taper phase).

Eat Like a Champion

You are what you eat—literally! Your body literally makes new cells out of the food you eat. Many athletes think that since they workout so much, they can basically eat and drink anything and “get away with it”. And if the goal is simply maintaining a pretty good-looking body, they're generally right. But if the goal is really elevating your game this summer, you've got to do better than that.

Champion eaters:

1. Drink water all day long, a minimum of 64 ounces.

2. Eat whole, unprocessed, real foods. There are foods and there are “food products”. Foods are naturally occurring. They are whole, unprocessed, and by their nature, they are real foods. “Food products” are man made by taking foods and processing them in some way. Processing decreases the nutritional value of foods. Foods trump food products every day of the week and twice on Sunday. Foods have the highest nutrient value because they have maintained their natural integrity. Eat meat, eggs, vegetables, fruits, nuts, and seeds--this is the high-octane, kick-butt stuff! Other than spices and mildly refined oils, eat everything else sparingly, if at all.

3. Front-load your intake. Eat a large breakfast or at least a solid breakfast and a mid-morning snack. You should have about two-thirds of your food intake by 1 o'clock in the afternoon. Many athletes skimp on breakfast, if they eat breakfast at all, and gorge themselves at dinner and after dinner. To best fuel your workouts and to best provide nutrients for recovery, you are better off eating evenly throughout the day, such as having about one-third of your intake at breakfast, one-third at lunch, and one-third at dinner. Did you know that as a means of packing more fat on their bodies, some sumo wrestlers employ a strategy of skipping breakfast and feasting in the evenings? Don't be a sumo triathlete—eat breakfast!

Do What You Stink At

You know what we're talking about. There's one discipline that you've never really gotten good at. And there's probably one that you always feel pretty solid in. Chances are, you continue to spend more workout time on your strong discipline and very little time on your weak discipline. Maybe that's why they are you're your strong and weak disciplines? To reverse this trend, commit to working on your weakness. You can usually do the same number of workouts in a week, while making the smart shift to more workouts in your weakness and less workouts in your strength. In most cases, you'll maintain your ability in your strength and substantially boost your ability in your weakness. Strong swimmers, for example, often continue to swim as much as four times a week, when they could maintain their ability swimming twice a week and free up more time for cycling and/or running.

Here are some ways to make your weeks of workouts more productive.

Strong Swimmer, Weak Cyclist							
	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Current Workout Layout	--Swimming --Cycling	--Swimming	--Swimming --Running	--Swimming --Cycling	--Rest Day	--Swimming	--Running
Better Workout Layout	--Swimming	--Cycling --Running	--Swimming	--Cycling --Running	--Rest Day	--Brick	--Cycling

Strong Cyclist, Weak Runner							
	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Current Workout Layout	--Rest Day	--Cycling	--Swimming --Running	--Cycling	--Swimming --Cycling	--Cycling	--Running
Better Workout Layout	--Rest Day	--Cycling --Running	--Swimming	--Cycling --Running	--Swimming	--Brick	--Running

Strong Runner, Weak Swimmer							
	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Current Workout Layout	--Cycling --Running	--Running	--Cycling --Running	--Running	--Swimming	--Running	--Rest Day
Better Workout Layout	--Swimming	--Cycling --Running	--Swimming	--Cycling --Running	--Swimming	--Brick	--Rest Day

Sleep Like a Baby

Of all the factors that go into your recovery from workouts, sleep is easily the most important. By upping your sleep game, you will up your triathlon game. That's because of the following important formula:

$$\text{Workout Stress} + \text{Recovery} = \text{Improvement}$$

Without adequate recovery, you will not improve, no matter how consistently you are executing great workouts. This summer, be the recovery king by sleeping better. Here's how:

1. Get as much sleep as you can. You can try and convince yourself that you can "get by with 5-6 hours a night" and maybe you can. But if you are getting by on 5-6 hours, you'd be racing better on 6-7, and even better on 7-8. Within the realistic confines of your life, get as much as you can. Of course, you have responsibilities that you just cannot avoid and that take up time. But maybe you could watch a bit less TV or simplify some aspect of your life and get to bed a half hour earlier. With sleep, every little bit helps and more is better.
2. Keep a consistent bedtime. Make winding down in the evening and going to bed at a regular time a habit. This helps foster the deepest possible sleep.
3. Keep your bedroom cool, dark, and quiet. Heat, light, and noise can all disrupt your sleep.
4. Use your bedroom only for sleeping and sex. No working on your laptop, paying bills, etc. This way, when you go to bed at night, you associate your bedroom as only the place to get a good night's sleep.

There you go—five things you can do right now to blast the competition. Now get after it!

To learn more about Jason Gootman, Will Kirousis, and Tri-Hard, please visit www.Tri-Hard.com.