



Triathlon Training Tips – Time to See the Principal

Well, principle with an “e” and not an “a”. Winter is over (did we really have one in New England this year?), so time to get out of the pool, off the bike trainer, and the “dreadmill” and get out to open waters, the roads and trails. Those new to the event or those experienced triathletes returning to local race series or moving up from Sprint to Olympic, Olympic to 70.3 or even to a Full can benefit from adhering to some Principles – such as the Principle of Specificity, the Principle of Reversibility and the Principle of Progressive Overload.

The Principle of Specificity means you need to train as you will compete. If your A, B or C races include a beach start then you will benefit from including some practice at beach starts in your training. If it will be a start where you must tread water before the gun (or cannon) goes off, you need to practice that. Consider adding to your training plan Start repeats. These are like the short interval repeats you did in the pool over the winter but consist of doing only the start portion multiple times with some rest between each rep. Also consider as part of your training to do a workout that includes all 3 disciplines. At a webinar by Mark Allen, he noted that he finally beat Dave Scott when he realized the race is all 3 disciplines and when he changed his training to include Brick workouts that were all 3 disciplines, he finally beat Dave Scott.

A considerable amount of time can be consumed in Transition so practicing those as you will on race day (or as best possible) should also be part of your training for the Spring and Summer. For my athletes, I plan T1 and T2 repeats. One client set up his child’s “kiddie pool” where he slid into on his bike set up so he could best replicate changing into socks and shoes for the ride. For T2 transitions, he wore the same shoes as on the bike but still practices racking and un-racking the bike. I also planned some “what if” workouts to practice what to do if the strap of your goggle strap breaks during the swim, or a shoelace when in transition or you get a flat tire on the bike that needs to be changed. While it is hoped that the Law of Specificity would not apply to the “What If’s” but still good to be prepared should they happen. Also, if you were not practicing “sighting” when in the pool, be sure to include it in your open water swims.

For all things related to the Principle of Specificity, it is best to recall what a women’s UCONN basketball player once said about the team coach “He did not have us practice until we got it right, he had us practice until we could not get it wrong.”

The Principle of Reversibility states that your fitness will decrease when the stress of the training load decreases. This can be fitness in either of the disciplines. While you can develop the 3 energy systems with run or trainer ride, you still need to develop fitness for each discipline by training each energy system in workouts for each discipline. There are not enough days in a week to train the 3 energy systems in the 3 disciplines. But, as you plan your training, just be sure all are part of your training to prevent the Principle of Reversibility from becoming a “lesson learned” at a race.



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Lastly, the Principle of Progressive Overload basically state that you cannot “cram” for your race like you did for your U.S. History final when you pulled an all-nighter. It takes about six weeks of training to develop an improvement in your physiology that is measurable. If you miss a workout due to the weather outside, don’t try to “make it up” by doing 2 workouts in a single day. If you are working with a certified coach, let the coach know the reason for the workout and the coach will replan the workout. If your coach is an on-line plan, check out “The Triathlete’s Training Bible” which provides guidance on what to do for different situations of missed training.

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