

## COMPLETE PERFORMANCE: EVENT PREPARATION

You have just crossed the finish line of your big event, you turn to your supporters who have just cheered you across the finish line and say to them “Thank you so much for your support I couldn’t have done any better, that was my complete performance!!”

The above scenario doesn’t just happen, to be in the best position possible to have this happen we need to have a plan. We need to prepare so your body is physically ready, you are mentally prepared for what you are about to do and the stress that goes with it. You have the skills and you have planned your tactics for what you will do in certain situations

Therefore to guide you through this process complete the following steps:

**Step 1:** Read the attached article by Jon Acland – Page 5

**Step 2:** Fill out the three worksheets to the best of your ability (don’t be limited by this space and use extra paper if required)

**Step 3:** Discuss these with your Complete Performance Coach

## Aspects of my performance

Event: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Step 1: List every aspect of the event that you will need practice to successfully complete on race day, write all your ideas down and rate your current ability on each. See page 8 for an example.

Aspects	1 = good, 3 = average, 5 = poor

## My Event Plan

Event: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Step 2:** How do you want to run your race? Knowing the course, playing to your strengths (tactics and pacing) and your nutrition plan is an important part of this. List all the details of the course on the left and then detail the time you want to be there and what you will do at each point and see page 9-11.

The course	Time and details

## Contingency planning

Event: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Step 3:** There are a number of things that could change your race plan as you have listed on page 3. It is time to play the devil's advocate and think of everything that might affect your perfect race plan –the weather, dropping your food, mechanicals...

Scenarios that could occur in my event	What I will do if this occurs it to make sure it doesn't happen or how can I limit its effects on my performance

## Event Preparation – My Complete Performance

Sited 14 September 2008 [www.sportzhub.com](http://www.sportzhub.com) Jon Ackland

The alarm goes off, it's race day. There's the quiet drive in the dark to the race venue. There's no one out at that time of the morning on the rain soaked streets. Everything is very still under the haze of streetlights., it's eerie. You manage to park the car, which is hard since the place is packed and you're running a little late. You open the car door and immediately feel the chill in the air. Your nerves start to jangle as you take your gear out of the back of the car trying to hurry since you're late, while trying not to hurry and remain calm. As you make your way to race start there is that same eerie quiet as athletes; eyes glassed over, absorbed in their own thoughts pass by and spectators look on whispering under their breaths. The closer you get to start time the more you feel the adrenaline push through your veins. There is energy, hype and psyche all around you.

The time is drawing closer. A megaphone starts to boom out information that you hear as a muffle not fully penetrating all the thoughts in your head. What does make it through the mental fog is that there is only 5 mins to race start. Later you hear 2 minutes. The air is heavy with a mixture of adrenaline, anxiety and fear. You struggle to relax, clear the extraneous thoughts from your head and get into the "racing zone".



You see terror in the eyes of some of the athlete's around you. Suddenly, without warning the gun goes off and immediately everything is happening too fast. There's jostling and confusion, you feel the fear rise up in your throat and desperately try to relax. Welcome to the world of racing. Interestingly a lot of the atmosphere and competition requirements of race day are not experienced until the moment they happen on that big day.

**WHY?** Athletes spend too much time doing mindless training.

There's not much thought given to whether it's a hilly course or a flat course, not much time given to the possibility of a rough sea swim, not much time given to the requirements of a beach start to the swim for a National Triathlon championships that you have trained 6 - 12 months for, for running into the transition area, finding your bike, putting on all your gear quickly and efficiently and what you do in the first few minutes on the bike as you leave the transition area.

All that seems to matter is how often you ride your bike, how many kilometers you do, how hard you are pushing yourself.

**WRONG!** (What a waste of energy !)

I've seen athletes do 108km of swim training in a pool over 3 months, thinking the requirements to prepare for a 2km sea swim involve the following; a 3km swim per session, backwards and forwards, in interval fashion rather than continuously, in fresh water, inside, without any waves. without a wetsuit, without anyone around them, following a black line (instead of open water navigation), at faster than race pace.

They believe that if they do this, they will be ready for the big day. Swimmers that usually cut out 2km in the pool in 30 mins end up taking 50 mins in rough seas. Why? They haven't practiced for the conditions that they will encounter in the race. Now I'm not "bagging" pool swimming because, hey, it's necessary, but if you've never practiced a open water swim beach start, then odds are, you're going to have a lousy start to your race.

A race result is based not only on how you train but also on how you "play the game".

"Playing the game" is just as important as all those training miles you work so hard at, so put some time into getting it right.

Always set a "game plan" for your race. Most people do all the training but forget the race plan. That is like an army general training his soldiers for an up coming battle but going into battle without a battle plan. His army would be slaughtered. A race is like a battle; there are a series of steps. If each step is carried out flawlessly, you have a perfect race. Here are some points that are worth thinking about before doing your big race.

### **Make a list of everything required in the race and train them -**

Work out all the things that you will experience on the day. Training is showing your body what will happen on the day so that's what you do. Your body should have experienced everything that will happen on the day and in small dose's it should experience the order in which they occur in. Another way of describing training is to say that training is a conversation with your body. It's like charades. You show your body each aspect of the event so that body understands what is going on. You start by showing your body the activities early in your programme. For multi sport, show your body kayaking, biking and running. Then you show it the distances.

Once your body knows this, you show it all the details, the boat you'll paddle in, the paddle, the drinking and eating systems, what you'll consume, how much and how often you consume them. Finally you show your body the conditions, the course, the weather conditions, the race hype, pressure and competition. If we could separate you from your body and ask your body what will happen on race day, your body having experienced every detail of the event, should be able to precisely describe what will happen.



Your body might say that for a triathlon that it starts with a swim, it will be at this pace, it will be in a wetsuit, it will be in the sea, it will be with a lot of people beside it, it will be this distance and it will be on this course. If your "charades" are good enough, there won't be a single thing that happens on race day that your body hasn't experienced before, which makes it very hard to have a bad day. Here is an example of a training plan/list for racing the swim section of a triathlon.

Triathlon Swim example - 1500m,

sea, beach start, surf Practice running beach start

Practice dolphin dives

Practice hard first 200m

Practice settling and trying to relax

Practice getting control of what needs to be done in your race plan without getting spooked

Practice finding rhythm

Practice wave duck dives

Practice drafting

Practice surges

Practice rounding the first buoy

Practice long and strong to the second buoy

Practice open water navigation

Practice homeward leg landmark sighting

Practice kicking final 200m

Practice swim till you touch twice

Practice standing quickly and beginning to remove wetsuit then goggles and swim cap

(this is not the only stuff but you get the idea)

A good race plan is like a surgical operation. It's efficient, clinical and precise.

### **Practice on smaller races**

Go to smaller "like" events and practice your race plan so that you can work on each aspect of your plan in racing conditions and pressure. You may feel that you had a successful event if you finally nailed the start, which had been a weak point in previous events. This allows you to modify and refine how you race. It usually is not about what placing you get, it's about whether you executed the plan perfectly.



## Learn the course

Make sure you train on the course before race day. This is easy if the race is in your hometown. If not, you might make one or two special trips late in your programme to check out the course, if the race is very important. If you can't do this, then turn up at the race a few days before if it's a "biggie". Or you might turn up a few hours before if it's not as important and ride or drive the course and learn every detail. If some one were ask you what the course was like, your answer would be "have you got 2 hours because that's how long it would take to tell you about it". You know it that well. Why is this important? If I were to say, you were to do a 5km running time trial on a course you know and a 5km time trial on a course you don't know, which one would you run faster on? The answer would obviously be on the course you know. You know how to pace yourself, where you are and how to deal with the terrain. The idea is to make the race "home turf". This gives you what they call the "home advantage".

## Set a plan for the course

Go over the course from landmark to landmark and work out how you will approach each part of the event.

An athlete in an ITU cycle race may be thinking where can I attack my opposition on the bike, where will I need to defend. Where do I need to be in the bunch going into this corner. What can I do coming out of that corner with the wind behind me.

Work out where you can attack using your strengths and where you need to defend because they are your weakness'. Work out how you will do it.

This begins to set the final steps of your race plan. Talk to other experienced athletes or coaches who have raced on the course before about any other factors (e.g. Wind conditions on the day) and to see if there is anything you've missed. This final plan is what I call the "computer programme".

The idea is that you manage/control the race by setting up all the steps/tasks that need to be completed. No surprises and a smooth running race. This also helps you to correctly visualize the race. On the day that the "hooter" sounds you just run the "computer programme". It's like doing a race over rocky terrain. If you've been over the course and know it well, you know exactly where to put your feet for every step. I do this, then that, then this. Your competition will obviously struggle to keep up.



- Example of the "computer programme" - Transition area on race day - pre race

- Enter transition area and set up bike (facing forwards, helmet upside on Tri bars if not too many bikes, lay out bike and running gear on red towel on ground)
- Go and get numbered
- Come back to bike and set gear, cranks 3 o'clock 9 o'clock, pump up tyres, put drink bottles in
- Check tidal conditions for swim advantage
- Check swim landmark for swim in
- Check swim exits, note problems, take mental snapshot of transition from exit
- Walk transition take mental snapshot of bike location from entrance
- Walk to bike counting rows and looking for landmarks including red towel
- Note bike exit mental snapshot and possible mishap areas
- Check first 500m of bike exit
- Check bike entrance mental snapshot gear location,
- Note run exit and finish line
- Put on wetsuit
- Swim cap, goggles under cap
- Stretch
- Warm swim 5 min 2-3 x 30secs at race pace (if water cold put wetsuit on and enter water at last minutes)
- Go to race start keep warm 5 mins before start

In the Ironman run at Taupo at 2 mile bay on the way out towards the airport, there is a choice of a steep climb up a hill on the footpath or a more gradual climb on the road. The obvious choice if you are running and want to make life easy is to run up the road. Running up the footpath is harder and will "kill" your legs which is not smart racing. When do you think most athletes decide which route to take? Yep, the moment they see it on race day. While this may not seem like much, there are tens and maybe even hundreds of decisions like that in an Ironman. If you are making every one of these decisions on the day of the race as you experience them, you'll get probably 20% of them wrong. You will have lost you anywhere between 2 minutes, 2 hours or caused you to be unable to complete the race.

### **Assessing your performance**

If you have a plan you can rate each step in the plan after you've finished to assess how perfectly you did the race. This gives you all the information you need to refine your racing plan and it tells you what key areas you need to train next time to go faster.

Race analysis - rating

1. Running beach start - good
2. Dolphin dive first few waves - OK
3. Swim hard first 200m - good
4. Settle and try to relax - poor
5. Get control of what needs to be done in your race plan without getting spooked - poor
6. Find rhythm - poor
7. Wave duck dives - OK
8. Set up a drafting position - OK
9. Rounding the first buoy go wide - good
10. Long and strong to the second buoy - good
11. Keep checking open water navigation - swim straight - good
12. On homeward leg use landmark sighting - good
13. Kick final 200m - good
14. Swim till you touch twice - good
15. Stand quickly and begin to remove wetsuit then goggles and swim cap - good

Refinement :

To race plan :

In my next race I need to relax more, because of this I lost control and took too long to find my rhythm.

To training plan :

Based on the other responses it appears I was uncomfortable with the waves, I need to practice this more in my next training programme.

### **Summary**

In summary don't just train, make sure you are a master of "playing the game".

There are only 2 reasons excluding acts of god where you can have a bad day.

You either have a "training surprise", which means something happened during the race that your body had not experienced in training. The second is a "racing surprise". Something happened during the race that you didn't have a plan for. If you don't have a "training surprise" and you don't have a "racing surprise", it is impossible to have a bad race. Hope this helps. Train hard, train smart, live long and perspire. - Jon