

As we enter a new year, many of us make resolutions or set goals for the year. Being members of a Tri Club, I am sure a great many of the goals we set for 2010 are related to some athletic endeavor.... first Ironman, PB at some distance or event etc. The setting of those goals creates the motivation to get out each and every day for training sessions. Triathlon is not an easy sport, we have to train in 3 disciplines and that does not include the extra strength and core work many of us do to supplement those 3 sports. Having goals and a plan to achieve the goals is the single most important thing an athlete can do before the start of any training program. It is the setting of goals that sets the foundation for our training plans. Before the start of any training program, sit down and answer the following.

What are my goals for the upcoming season(s)?

Are the goals realistic? Do I have an achievable goal and a stretch goal?

What is motivating me to achieve these goals?

If you keep a training log or diary, write down the answers to these questions. You may have to refer to them during your training to provide support.

The next important step is to create a plan to get you to your goal. The more ambitious the goal, the more the reason to create a plan to guide you. Without a plan, an ambitious goal will be difficult to achieve. A plan may not be required if your goal is to run a 10k in two months time and you have run marathons in the past. However, if your goal is to run that 10k two minutes faster than your personal best, you may need a good plan to help you get there.

Why are training plans so important? Without a training plan, an athlete will tend to perform training sessions that do not complement each other. Despite best intentions, the training sessions become disjointed. The athlete loses focus on the goals, injuries become more likely and the athlete finds they are not improving at a rate that will ensure they meet their goals. In essence, they are just "winging it". If you are serious about your goals, a training plan is your best friend.

Think of a house builder with no blueprints. They start at the foundation, hammering nails into wood. At the start it looks OK but as the house rises to the second floor and the roof, the overall design becomes cluttered. There are wasted spaces. The requirements for electrical and plumbing space do not fit what happened on the first floor. The builder ends up with a poorly constructed house.

There are many important aspects of a training plan. Areas that are typically incorporated into a training plan include.....

- The training sessions are built in such a way to help the athlete meet their goals.
- The sessions use a periodization method to safely increase the athletes fitness level.
- Rest weeks are used to provide a much needed mental and physical break from the training.
- Milestones are incorporated into the plan to gauge the athletes progress.
- Tapering is used before the race to ensure the athlete is well rested but fit for the big day.

The holiday season is a busy time but if you find some quiet moments, take the time to think about your goals and start sketching out a plan to help you achieve them. If you need a little help with this process, call me at 390-0187 and I can provide some information on how to get started.

All the Best in 2010
Al Shirley