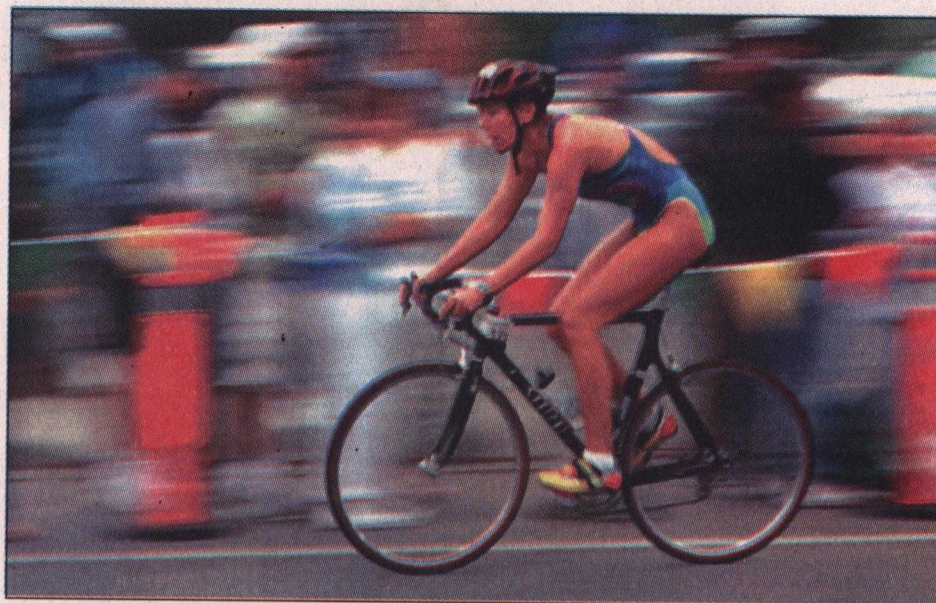


Tri THIS



One key to setting your training schedule for the Sentinel Triathlon, shown left and below in 2000, is to make sure you allot the appropriate amount of time on each discipline.

Dan Coyro/
Sentinel file photos



If you're thinking about doing the Sentinel, now's the time for a plan

By VICTOR PLATA

Sentinel correspondent

With the Sentinel Triathlon looming eight short weeks away, now is the time to focus on what it is you want to accomplish by training for, and finishing, the race.

It has been said that haphazard training produces haphazard results. Setting a goal and making a plan to accomplish that goal will improve the odds of success, and will provide a motivating factor to keep you on task.

Defining a goal is like creating an equation; a wise

goal will equal the sum of many different factors in your life. Take your current fitness level, the hours per week you can train, and your work and family obligations and add any other major circumstances that will affect your ability to prepare for the race.

With those factors in mind, set a goal that will be challenging, but not impossible.

One highly motivated triathlete I know set a goal of winning his local triathlon. In the past he had almost won the race by training for more than 15 hours per week. His wife was against his rigorous schedule since it left him in an exercise-induced coma with little time for his family.

After discussing with his wife how many hours per

week would be appropriate for him to train, they compromised on 10 hours per week. His primary goal became balancing his training with his family commitments, and his secondary goal became placing as high as possible on 10 hours of training per week. When he finally placed fourth in the race his happy wife was there to celebrate with him.

Regardless of whether you train for 10 hours a week and have a happy partner, or train for 20 hours and live a lonely life, there are some basic elements that you should incorporate into your program for the Sentinel.

First, divide your training time based on the percentage of time it takes to finish each leg of the

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SURVIVING THE SENTINEL

This is the first in a three-part series on preparing for the upcoming Sentinel Triathlon, which will take place Sunday, Sept. 29.

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example, the bike is the longest leg of the race, often taking more than 50 percent of the race time to complete, so dedicate 50 percent of your training time to cycling.

Running takes about 30 percent, and swimming takes about 20 percent of race time to complete, so commit to those percentages of your training time as well. If you are particularly weak in one event you can skew your training time for that skill and help improve your weakest link.

Within your training time you should include a few key workouts: The long ride, the long run, some interval work and the "brick".

The Sentinel is an endurance event, so endurance training is key to finishing strong. The bike leg is about 24 miles long, so an endurance practice ride should be at least this long and at the most, 75 miles. Whatever distance your current long ride is, if you decide to increase it, do it gradually — like 10-15 percent each week.

The same philosophy applies to the long run, with a 6-mile run a basic survival distance, all the way up to 16 miles for hardcore elite triathletes. Distance should be increased even more gradually than cycling, about 10 percent each week. Running on soft dirt trails is the best surface to reduce the chance of injury.

Once per week include intervals at race pace, or a little faster, for swimming, and either running or cycling. Intervals are strong medicine, and should be used cautiously because they

increase the risk of injury along with their fitness benefits.

Typical interval training can be four or five repeats that are three to six minutes long with equal rest. Rest intervals can be reduced each week. Consistency is more important than intensity for endurance events, so focus on staying healthy for eight weeks instead of flying in August and being burned out in September.

Once or twice before the race try a "brick" session. A brick involves riding hard on the bike followed immediately by a short, hard run. It helps you get used to the heavy leg feeling during a triathlon. I recommend a session that includes 10 minutes on the bike followed by a five-minute run three or four times. Take plenty of rest between each interval to recover.

In addition, you need to be comfortable swimming in the cold ocean. Even accomplished pool swimmers can have a difficult time in the cold and sometimes choppy water of the Monterey Bay. Acclimate to the waters by getting in a few times before the triathlon.

Try out the Rough Water Swim around the Wharf this Saturday. It is the same course you'll swim in the Sentinel, so you can set a time to beat for the triathlon. (Details can be found by calling the Santa Cruz City lifeguards at 420-6015.)

Now is the time to define your goal and focus your training to finish the Sentinel Triathlon. Scheduling your training and adding the key elements for triathlon training should help you reach that goal — be it a happy partner, or an exercise-induced coma.

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