

# TRIATHALON TRAINING FOR RUNNERS – PART THREE: ON THE RUN

By DON SIKORSKI  
*Special to the Bulletin*

Runners will often enter a triathlon race believing that if they survive the swim and the bike portion of the event, they are almost home free. After all, a distance running background gives them an advantage over the competition, and they are entering the least technically challenging stage of the race. But possessing the ability to hammer out a fast 5K in a weekend road race and holding it all together during the final miles of a triathlon run are two different things. With the proper training and conditioning, runners can make a successful transition from road racing to triathlons, provided the body is able to function following a challenging swim and bike ride.

Al Lyman of Pursuit Fitness ([pursuit-fitness.com](http://pursuit-fitness.com)) coaches individuals of all levels of ability looking to race triathlons. Lyman believes that the key to a successful run in a triathlon is being able to get off the bike in good shape. "You have to maximize your ability to run off the bike," explains Lyman of the transition to the race's final stage. "Your body is in a fatigued state and depleted of energy." Lyman recommends that his athletes incorporate "bricks" (intensive, short rides on the bicycle immediately followed by a run) into their weekly training schedules. The goal of these workouts is to prepare the legs to adapt to running when fatigued. Lyman stresses that runners need to be patient, and that they will gradually adapt to the benefits of this type of training if done properly. "It takes time to get used to," says Lyman. "The overall intensity and volume in running changes dramatically in multi-sport racing."

Lyman points out that for runners making the transition to triathlons, the biggest difference in training is the amount of running done per week, which decreases in order to make time for training in the water or on the bicycle. "With the exception of the elite athletes, the overall run volume is low for triathlon training," says Lyman. "The person who used to run 4-6 times per week is now only running maybe 3 or 4 times each week, and that includes brick runs, where the benefit is to work on the transition portion of the run. When you take recovery into account, the intensity of running must become less". Runners who approach triathlons with the same mindset as a competitive runner risk injury or burn out since varying the intensity level becomes critical in multi-sport training. "Economy and efficiency of movement become critically important," suggests Lyman. "Recovery is the big thing. Triathlons are not speed events. It's about stamina and endurance." Lyman recommends incorporating strides, comprised of 6-12 accelerations of 20-30 seconds in duration, into the running portion of triathlon training in an effort to maintain leg speed and avoid falling into a training rut. "It shouldn't just be slow or steady state training," says Lyman. "You have to mix it up".

Chris Hansen is one of Lyman's students that possessed a strong distance running background but worked with Lyman to alter his training in order to adapt to multi-sport racing. Hansen emphasizes that learning the three different aspects of triathlon training and handling the transition to each discipline is the key to improving in a triathlon race. He agrees with Lyman that developing the ability to run well after a taxing bicycle ride will make you a better triathlete. "Runners go into a triathlon thinking that they're going to get off the bike and just crush people, says Hansen. "They don't realize that their legs are doing a motion they're not used to." Hansen suggests focusing on becoming a better and more efficient rider in order to improve running performance. "Runners should work on improving their strength on the bike," he says. "A triathlon is more about strength than raw speed since you're running with tired legs. It's more about who has their threshold in a decent location, since you're not running near maximum velocity like you would in a 5K road race." Hansen will begin his workouts in March or April by running threshold sessions (efforts of around 85% of maximum heart rate with short rest recoveries) and will transition to one mile repeats on the track as the competitive season approaches. "The goal is to get used to running the pace needed to run in a triathlon," says Hansen.

Now that you've learned all three aspects of triathlon training, it's time to get outside and get some exercise. With some hard work and the proper knowledge, tackling a triathlon is right around the corner.

*This article is Part Three of a four part series on distance runners learning the three disciplines of triathlon training. Part Four, which will provide coaching tips on how to plan an effective triathlon training schedule, will run in the Norwich Bulletin on Sunday, October 1st.*

## **Racing Report**

Stanford alum Ryan Hall was a 5K specialist in college. But at the 29<sup>th</sup> Annual New Haven Road Race, Hall proved that he can run longer distances with the best runners in the country. The 23 year-old Hall notched his second national championship of his career with a Labor Day win over the 20K distance in just his second-ever road race and longest competition of his career. Hall pulled away from the field of contenders just after the ten mile mark to win in 59:29. Fernando Cabada, who earlier in the year claimed the national 25K title, earned runner-up honors in 59:43. Marla Runyan, who last competed and won in New Haven in 2003, was the top female finisher in 1:08:28. Elva Dryer, who surrendered the lead to Runyan at 11 miles, was 2<sup>nd</sup> in 1:08:39. Both Hall and Runyan earned \$7,500 for their winning efforts. The 20K USATF National Championship race drew over 2,000 runners.

Don Sikorski writes a twice-monthly running column for the Norwich Bulletin. His “Coach’s Corner” column can be accessed at [www.moheganstriders.org](http://www.moheganstriders.org). He can also be reached by e-mail at [kdcsikorski@netzero.net](mailto:kdcsikorski@netzero.net).