

Triathlon Newbie – What I learnt from my first Triathlon

I didn't really know what to expect at my first Triathlon, apart from the fact I was very nervous.

I had competed (I use that term very loosely) or should I say completed numerous bike events cycling up to 68 miles, ran a couple of Marathons including New York, 3 Duathlons and a handful of half Marathons.

How difficult was it going to be to swim 400m, bike 6 miles then run 1.5 miles?

What I did know, whether I liked it or not, this WAS my first step on an Ironman Ladder 2 year training plan.

First I was extremely nervous. I think It quickly dawned on me that the reason I was also apprehensive was that it was the first time I had done a race on my own, no bestie beside me and also I didn't have a coach. I had watched You tube videos about transitioning (the part where you change your shoes and grab your bike)

Here are a few tips of what I discovered on my first Novice Triathlon.

Assuming all your training has taken place and you have signed up for your first Tri, or at least thinking about it.

I was lucky enough to have gone around the route with a friend the week before. It certainly helped, I could tell I was nervous when he explained there were steps around the corner and I replied 'what kind of steps?..... how many different kinds do you get?

KIT

I had tried and tested all my kit out before hand, it's a standing joke that I like to wear something new on race day. I did buy myself a Tri suit which I highly recommend, and I had cycled to the not so local pool, swam and then cycled home wet. However the thought of running wet and semi naked through the streets was filling me with fear.

I also wore a sports bra under my suit, it has also been tried out in the pool. I know some suits have a built in bra system.

I put speedy laces in my shoes

I did decide on wearing socks, I knew it might take me longer to put them on, but I had traded that with not wearing bike gloves, the distance was short so I could do without gloves.

Race belt – although our race number was on our left arm and right calf. I still wore mine as I contained my inhaler.

Sun visor (in the hope the sun might come out? No, to dispel bad hair after coming out the water)

Garmin – on my bike

Suunto – on my wrist Although on the day I decided it was one thing too much to think about and I left it off.

Gels – Taped on the top tube of my bike, I just tape the lid part so when I tear it off it's ready to drink/eat.

Spare tyre – Firmly round my waist! In my bike bag under my seat with tools (and nail file in case I break a nail)

Bike shoes

Body Glitter (you thought I was going to say Body Glide didn't you) a little sparkle goes a long way. No but seriously Body Glide is essential, I put it inside the backs of both shoes so my feet slip in. Also when you are in your wetsuit (other events, use round your next to prevent chaffing)

Registration

I arrived at registration super early after a huge bowl of porridge. Had my numbers drawn on my left arm and right leg, he assured me it would wear off in around 3 weeks. I had my timing chip put on my left ankle, it keeps it away from the gearing on the right side of the bike. Number to put on the front of my bike and my heat details. Now this is where it all goes a little fuzzy. I have never even watched competitive swimming and 'heats' cue cortisol and my 'ta dah' new item to wear on race day - the heat coloured cap.

Spot the newbie – Race briefing commences outside on the chilly morning and there is one person standing in bare feet, tri suit clutching swim cap and goggles – you guessed it!

My first question to myself was "why is everyone fully clothed when they're about to dive into a pool)

I hadn't seen the heat times and I wasn't in the pool for another 2 hours and 15 Minutes. I have to say, it was a little 'fend for yourself' and as a Triathlon Newbie I was left a little bewildered. Luckily it gave me lots of time poolside to chat to the other first timers. I had porridge bars, banana and a gel.

Get yourself a locker too if it is an indoor swim

Transition area

I racked my bike in transition, checked the tyres. I laid out everything on a coloured towel in which order they would be put on. Bike shoes with socks slightly inside, race belt, helmet on bike with glasses inside. Running shoes with visor at the back.

Take a 3rd pair of shoes or flip flops, as you are going to have to walk from transition area to the poolside. You can pop these with your jacket/ fleece spare hydration bottle in the locker before the start.

Set up your towel on the left hand side of your bike. You are going to run on the left of your bike through transition too.

Take a note of where your bike is, so that when you come out the pool you can count along the racks to find yours. I didn't have a problem with this as I was so slow there were only 3 bikes left in transition!!!! Problem solved!

The Start



That's me in the black cap lane 3 – Looking slightly more enthusiastic than the marshall!

Finally entering the pool we were informed that we would all go at 5 second intervals, this is where the cap colour comes in. I was last in my lane, each lane swam in either clockwise or anti clockwise. We were instructed that if someone touches your foot that indicates that they want to over take and you must stop at the end to let that person over take then No overtaking allowed in the lane. My foot got touched once and I allowed that person to over take. However it happened another twice and that was actually the person in the lane next to me so when I stopped there wasn't anyone there so be aware of this.

Count your own lengths, there is a person sitting at the end of the lane with a coloured float and they will tap you on the head when you just have 2 lengths to go.

I took a gel around 30mins before the race began.

The Bike

I was out of the pool and onto the bike, leaving their coloured cap behind. Don't touch your bike until you have your helmet on and fastened, after wiping my feet on the towel into my bike shoes. Race belt on Some people attach their bike shoes to their bike, I haven't mastered this yet. Run out of the transition area before mounting your bike. The same when you come back in, you dismount before entering the transition area, I unclipped my feet from the pedals about 50m from the dismount area, others have mastered taking their feet out the shoes while still going and manage to still pedal with feet on top of shoe. I took a gel within a few minutes of getting on the bike once I settled down.

The Run



Take your helmet off before you start running! I didn't settle into the run at all, it would generally take me 3 miles before I settle into the run. My legs felt like they were someone else's and I think that's the one thing that people struggle with the most.

Don't forget to smile when you cross the finish line, stretch, hydrate and celebrate with some champagne – Congratulations you've just become a triathlete!

I am writing this on the eve of my second Triathlon, just to see if I like/don't like it! And my race day nerves have arrived early!