



## Smart Planning for Next Season

By Coach Ian

With races selling out sometimes a year in advance, it's becoming more important to plan ahead for your triathlon race season.

Your training and racing during 2009 should have taught you a great deal about your strengths and weaknesses, both in mind and body. While they are still fresh in your mind, take the time to create an action plan for an improved season next year.

If you are serious about making significant gains for next season this article will help you to focus on the key activities that allow you to get a head start.

Grab a copy of your current year goals, events, and a calendar, and spend some focused time on planning.

Step 1: Plan your race schedule as soon as possible. Try not be tempted to register for every new race to come up, falling victim to racing based on peer pressure. If you enjoy racing with your friends, then perhaps planning with them is optimal.

Step 2: Review the goals you set for yourself for this season. Compare them to your results and determine if you attained them. If you did, then write down the determining factor for your success. If you did not achieve your goals, outline why you came up short. Honesty is critical here.

Step 3: Write down your weaknesses. Again, be honest, then prioritize them, starting with the most important, and describe how you plan to address each weakness. While they may never become your strengths, the weakest link in the chain can often determine your level of success, so any improvement will be of benefit.

Understand that weaknesses can take many shapes. They may include the obvious, such as lack of lack of swim stroke mechanics, or poor climbing power, but may also include less obvious topics, such as poor nutrition habits, lack of mental preparation, or poor planning.

Step 4: Focus first on the most obvious opportunity for improvement and the one that you can impact the most dramatically. Determine a plan of action for this one piece of the puzzle. Set a specific desired end result and timetable for this, then move on to the next.



Step 5: Now look at your strengths. You may have heard the saying, "Train your weaknesses and race your strengths." How can you use your strengths to your advantage? Which races and/or event courses complement your strengths?

Step 6: Now determine that one thing you feel you must accomplish next season, so that when you look back you'll be able to proclaim the season a "success?" Consider the big picture first, and not the specific detail of individual races.

Step 7: Consider the most critical key, goal in Step 6, and set actionable steps to achieve it, including timelines. Again, focus on those big, important activities that will generate most of your results.

For example, is losing 15 pounds critically important to you? Is this one of the most important factors to help you race faster and feel and look better? Will next season be a success to you if you lose the weight? Improved nutrition is an overlooked but critical area of focus. Rather than go on a diet to lose the 15 pounds, how will you learn to feed and fuel yourself properly so that you never have to diet again?

For next season use a detailed planning process, which starts with the 'big' picture and gets more detailed until each block of training is planned. Training is as much mental as it is physical. You must train the body and the mind in order to progress towards your goals. Keep it fun, maintain discipline and play an active role in your continuing education and you will see both mental and physical improvements.