



Power Training. Powerful Results!

PEAKS COACHING GROUP

Article Name: Developing a Triathletes Annual Training Plan for Peak Performance

Author: By Brett Bastian BS USAT & PCG Coach

Now that the leaves are turning colors and fall has set in, it is time for the triathlete to get some well-deserved and needed rest. It is a great time to reflect back on your past training/race season, set new goals, spend quality time with your family, and begin to formulate your next annual training plan during this break in training. Dr. Tudor Bompa, an exercise pioneer, introduced a new concept in training in 1963. Periodization, as he refers to it, is a systematic way of outlining your training program by arranging days and weeks of training into an organized, goal-orientated plan to peak for a specific event, like a major ironman triathlon. The training goal of one phase builds on the fitness and development from the previous phase, which contributes to achieving that training goal. The art of periodization uses the progressive overload, general adaptation, and recovery principles bringing in an element of science and planning into exercise variation. It consists of four training phases— Preparation, Foundation, Build, and Competition. The new season begins with the Preparation phase. This phase helps re-educate and condition your muscles, helps the triathlete develop a training strategy for the upcoming season, and begins to condition the triathlete's cardio-respiratory system. Workouts are unstructured allowing plenty of flexibility to prevent early burnout. This is an excellent time to add cross-training and sport-specific skills to spice up your old training routine, improve economy, and prevent boredom. Volume slowly builds, focusing primarily on frequency & duration rather than intensity. After 4 weeks of conditioning, you can add sport-specific aerobic testing to help determine training zones for the start of your annual training plan. The length of this phase depends on the aerobic conditioning of the triathlete entering the phase and the athlete's designated "A" races.

The next phase is the Foundation training phase. It is designed to improve your central nervous system's ability to recruit slow twitch muscle fibers to develop an efficient aerobic engine. It is the most important phase for the ironman triathlete focusing on overall body conditioning, strength, mental and physical performance, and the endurance necessary to achieve your race goals. Workouts are performed at or slightly below your prescribed aerobic threshold, determined by sport-specific testing, with occasional muscular endurance workouts late in the phase to help develop your race-pace. The length of this phase depends on the athlete's fitness level, lasting anywhere from 8 to 14 weeks. Most first time IM triathletes will benefit from an extended period in this phase to help develop a solid aerobic base.

The Build training phase is the next stage that the triathlete will enter. It is designed to continue the recruitment of slow twitch muscle fibers, in addition to the recruitment of glycolytic fast twitch (Fta) muscle fibers. The goal of this phase is to maintain sustainable race pace at aerobic threshold through higher training intensities and increased training volume. Race simulation workouts are introduced during this phase to prepare the triathlete for the specific demands of priority races and to work on sport limiters once a solid endurance base is established. Resistance training and aerobic conditioning continue to help build the triathlete's endurance, speed, and power. This phase usually lasts 4 to 8 weeks and may be repeated depending on the length of the race season and the number of designated "A" races.

The Competition training phase is the last phase before the "A" designated race. It is designed to help the triathlete continue to work on sport specific elements to improve race performance. An athlete must be in top condition when entering this phase. It combines weekly or bi-weekly race-pace efforts with prescribed

periods of rest to prevent over-training. The aerobic energy system is maintained during this phase through long, low intensity workouts at your aerobic threshold. This phase starts three weeks before your key race designed to help the triathlete peak for optimal race performance. A rest week commonly follows this phase to help the triathlete recover before starting back into their annual training plan. By following the periodization principles developed by Dr. Bompa, an athlete is able to arrange their days and weeks of training into an organized, goal-orientated plan to achieve their specific fitness goals. Enjoy your time off. It is well-deserved. Good luck on developing your annual training plan for a peak performance this season.

About the Author:

Brett Bastian is an age-group triathlete and multisport coach for Peaks Coaching Group. He enjoys working with all types of triathletes to help them reach their full potential.

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