

Runners' Corner

The Run... Bringing It Home

Running For Triathlon

Do You Love Or Dread The Final Leg?

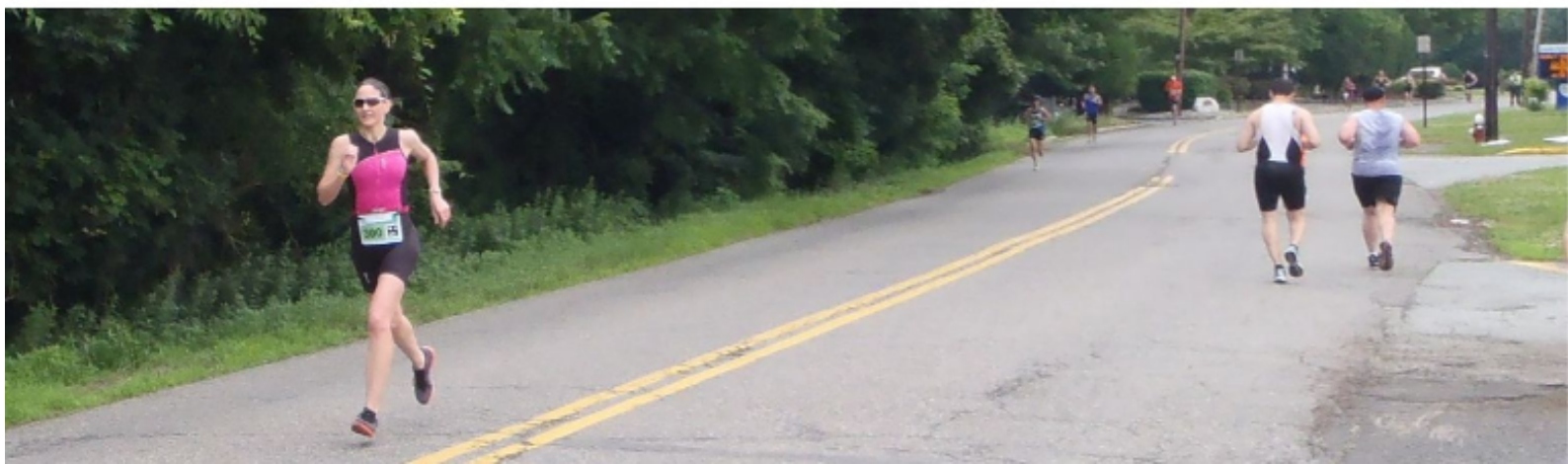
BY JOAN SCRIVANICH

Running can invoke different emotional responses in a triathlete depending on who you talk to. If you love to run and you come from a running background, then you probably can't wait to get to the run leg because either you know that will be your chance to pass others, or you just feel more natural being on your feet. If running is your weakness or you don't enjoy it as much, you may dread that last leg of a triathlon thinking the best ones are behind you. No matter which side of the running spectrum you fall on, read on to learn how to make the best of both your training and the run segment of a triathlon.

Rubber Band Legs

For those of you who have never done a triathlon before, you may be surprised by how your legs feel the first time you run off the bike. Running after riding a bike is different from running on fresh legs. Your legs will feel heavy or like rubber bands. This is why we practice! You never want to do anything new on race day, so always try new things during training first to see how it works out (that goes for nutrition, clothes, etc.).

Just remember that it's totally normal for your legs to feel heavy at the start of the run and you will get used to it.



A Faster Run Leg

Keep in mind, no one is as fast after a hard bike ride compared to a stand alone run, but your goal is to make the difference as small as possible. Here are a few ways to accomplish this:

- If cycling is your weakness, become stronger on the bike so that you're not as fatigued when you get to the run.
- If running is your weakness, focus more on your run training. Maybe add a day or two of extra running to your schedule.
- When you get toward the end of the bike, start thinking about the transition and make that mental switch from being a cyclist to being a runner.
- Use the last part of the bike leg to switch to an easier gear and also stretch out. Get out of the saddle and loosen up those hip flexors.
- Practice bike-run bricks. For those of you unfamiliar with bricks, they're basically two workouts smooshed together. So it could be a swim followed immediately by a bike or, in this case, a bike followed immediately by a run. And by immediate, I mean within 5 minutes. No stopping to watch General Hospital :).

Get Mental

The first part of the run is more mental than physical. So keep at it and don't give up or get discouraged! It helps to break the run up into more manageable chunks. Think of only running one mile at a time or even one block at a time. Whatever distance it is that you feel you can get through, run that distance, then say to yourself, "Ok, I was able to run that. I think I'll run another." This will make anything from a 5k through a marathon or even an ultra easier to get through.

Running Form

When it comes to running form, a lot of people ask "how should my foot land?", but you can't focus on one small aspect of your form and ignore the rest. You have a whole body on top of those feet!

What's more important than being a heel-striker or landing mid-foot is that your foot is landing underneath you and that you're not overstriding. Overstriding will slow you down; it's like braking with each step you take.

Running is essentially controlled falling, so you want to have a small lean and let gravity do the work for you. Think of the lean as coming from your ankles. For those of you who tend to bend over at the waist when you run, think of bringing those hips forward and running a little taller.

Including core work, strength, and intervals in your training will also help with your form. A strong core and strong muscles will stabilize your body while running. Including intervals into your training will teach your body to run with more efficiency.

By running with good form, you'll run more efficiently. This means you use less energy at the same pace you would run with bad form. You'll also be less prone to injury.

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Equipment

When it comes to equipment, running can be pretty simple and no frills. You need sneakers... and of course clothes. Technical clothing will be more comfortable because it wicks away sweat to keep you drier and chafe-free. You'll also find sunglasses and either a hat or visor helpful. A hat or visor will not only be useful on sunny days, but also when it's raining to keep the rain out of your eyes.

Your running shoes don't have to be the most expensive or trendy out there, but they do have to be the most comfortable for you and work for you.

If you want more information from your running and training, you can get more high-tech with a Garmin or heart rate monitor. At the very least, you do need a simple sports watch to time your workouts. These tools will help you measure the work you're doing with speed, time, and heart rate so that you can test where you are now and make adjustments to your training so you can see improvements.

Never use these tools alone! In other words, don't train solely by heart rate, when you can train with heart rate and perceived exertion.

Safety

Safety should always be your #1 priority. That means being aware of your surroundings (both people and obstacles). Make sure you can be seen by wearing light colored clothing & a reflective vest at night or bright colored clothing at night (whether you like it or not, the 80s are back, so fluorescent colors are pretty easy to find now).

If you have to run in the street, make sure you're going against traffic. But sticking to the sidewalk is so much safer!

Remember it this way - cycling and running are opposites. When cycling, you're on the road going with traffic. When running, you're on the sidewalk, but if you have to be on the road, go against traffic.

Some people purposefully run on the road thinking it's softer than the sidewalk and better for their legs. Let's face it, hard is hard! When looking at an isolated sample of asphalt and concrete, yes asphalt is softer. But you have to take into account all the layers underneath that make up the road which contributes to hardness.

So, the bottom line is that unless it's dirt or grass, it's just plain hard. Whenever you do get a chance, run on dirt, grass and trails. It's much easier on your legs and doesn't beat them up as much.

I also discourage everyone from running with earphones, especially when running by yourself. Even if you keep the volume low, it may take your attention away. It could also make you appear distracted by those looking for people who are vulnerable.

Keep an ID or Road ID on you whenever you go out. Also tell someone how long you'll be out and where you'll be.

Something is better than nothing. So whether you incorporate all these tips into your training and racing, or only a few, it will improve your running in a triathlon.

Happy Running!



ABOUT JOAN

Joan Scrivanich is a USA Triathlon and USA Track & Field Certified Coach as well as a Certified Strength & Conditioning Specialist. She holds a Master Degree in Exercise Physiology from Columbia University and has been an endurance athlete for over 20 years. Find out more about Joan at www.RiseEndurance.com and follow Rise Endurance at twitter.com/RiseEndurance and facebook.com/RiseEndurance.