

TIPS FOR RACE DAY

Lynne Algar

Setting up transition

- How will you notice your bike in transition? Firstly, where possible position your bike on a rack with an easy 'bike out', 'bike in' and 'run out'. Identifying the position of your bike is helped by looking for distinctive landmarks such as its line in relation to a tree or sign. You cannot highlight your bike space with markings.
- Use imagery to go through T1 and T2 in your head, identify the mount/ dismount lines. I guarantee this will help your transition be automatic, smooth and faster!
- Ensure the bike is 'ready to ride'. Have it in a gear which you can get some speed up fast.
- If you plan on doing a flying mount then use elastics around the back of the cycling shoe and have them hooked to a safe part of the bike. These should be thin enough to snap when you pedal.
- What to put in transition? Runners, sunglasses/visor (optional), helmet (unclipped ready for on), cycling top or long sleeves (optional), in-race nutrition/fluids.



Mount and Dismount



- If you plan to do a flying mount or "flying squirrel" then make sure your cycling shoes are tied onto the bike with rubber band.
- Be sure you can run with your bike controlling it by the saddle.
- Make sure you are familiar with the saddle height so that you clear it when you go to jump on!
- When hopping on make sure to move your hands from the saddle to both hoods.
- Get your feet straight down onto the pedals as quick as possible and start pedalling. With momentum then you can start putting your feet into your shoes and strap up but try minimise the impact on pedalling.

- When dismounting, have your feet out on top of the shoes in good time prior to the dismount line. With hands on both hoods, take your dominant leg back behind you, around the saddle and between the opposite leg and the frame. You should be able to coast here in perfect balance and control, then hit the ground running one leg at a time. Hold onto the bike and look where you are going.

Fitting a wetsuit

When buying a wetsuit typically choose one that feels snug and comfortable with least restriction regardless of price or brand this is No.1. (Note that they tend to stretch a little with wear). Entry level suits typically have slightly restricted range in the shoulders and bigger buoyancy panels around the body especially at the hips. More advanced swimmers may feel restricted shoulder movement and as if they have they're ass in the air whilst swimming in these suits. Under your wetsuit you can wear your Tri-suit (this is either a 1 or 2 piece with support and a thin chamois for the saddle). If you don't have a tri suit, then a pair of lycra shorts and tank top will do as long as you are not flashing flesh in transition (this is a rule and you will be penalised if you undress in transition). If you are more comfortable adding clothing such as a cycling top or supported run top in transition this is optional. When putting on the wetsuit, wiggle and roll it on. It is made of neoprene material designed to hug the skin, so be gentle and inch it up over your shoulders. Make sure that you have as much freedom as possible in your hips and shoulders before zipping it up. Putting a lubricant around the neck, ankles, wrists and elbows is always a good call to help with an efficient transition (wetsuit removal) and avoid chaffing. Vaseline is good for this but wipe your hands clean of it after before touching your goggles! Make sure you can reach the toggle at the zip to remove. When you get into the water, make sure the suit is completely submerged and squeeze it onto the skin further so that it doesn't create air pockets and drag.

Pre-Race warm up

Despite taking part in an effective warm up for sessions on a daily basis, I've noticed at races that athletes tend to get a bit of stage-fright. Warm up for a race is no different that if it were for a hard training session. Again this should be automatic. So what do you do? Think about what is you want to achieve in the warm up. "I want to prepare my body to perform in these zones (Immediate, Short and Long Term Energy). I want to be fast (Immediate), I want to get into Race Pace (Short), I want to be efficient and conserve energy (Long)". Start with some stretching, specific strength and mobility work. Follow with a 'loosener' of easy aerobic work like a short jog. Then introduce some strides and drills leading into fast short efforts. Finally, bring your heart rate and blood lactate up towards race pace zones with an increase in speed. Make sure to do something that ensures you do not start warming up half way into the swim. Plan the

timing of your warm up so that you don't do it too early and leave yourself hanging around. Within the hour of race start is a good gauge of when you should warm up. Some people need/ like a longer warm up to others. But as an example, give yourself 30mins to get your bike warm up done, and set up your transition before heading out for a 20min run warm up. During this time, imagine the course route in your head.

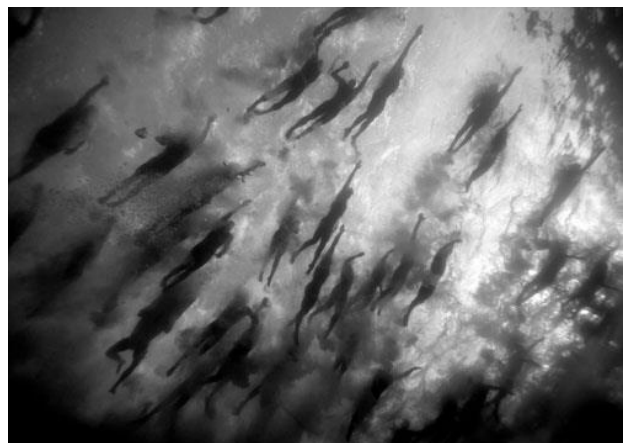
Pre-race Open Water “acclimatisation”.

Typically in an Irish race you could be given anything between 5–10mins water time before race start. Use this as an opportunity to fix goggles, hats, and squeeze your wetsuit on. Acclimatise yourself to the water temperature. Prior to entering the water look for your swim route from land, identifying land marks in line your buoys. A large tree, a mountain, a headland or a church are more easily spotted in the water than a little buoy. Once you get into the water, look for these landmarks. Good sighting is free speed. Use a decent pair of tried and tested open water friendly goggles (tinted for the “sun”, and wide fit so that you have maximum peripheral vision. Swedish style goggles are not recommended in case you get a belt in the eye). Finally, practise a number of fast starts lasting ~15m before drifting relaxed toward the start line.

Deep water starts

Most Irish races are started in this manner, top tips to an enjoyable race start ☺

- Find a space you are comfortable with. Needless to say, the aggressive hot-spots are at the front-middle of the pack. If you prefer to avoid high intensity arm ‘n’ leg action then I suggest you move to the lateral peripheries or the back of the pack. If you do move back make sure to start with everyone else, don't let them go, get into their streamline. Regardless of your position, just go for it, legs on full throttle and get the stroke rate and distance per stroke covered working.



- The pack will always spread out but – despite potential pushing and the off perpendicular swimmer – stay on your own track, sight sight sight! At least one swimmer will go off course, and typically they take a number of followers with them.
- The general speed of the swim pack will be highest within the first 100m, and then it will slow down. So don't be afraid to get stuck in at the start if you are a strong swimmer and confident in your swim fitness and OW skills.

At the buoy

Similar to the start of the swim this is the other most aggressive point on the swim course. If you are in a pack there is the potential that you will come into close contact with other competitors. Losing your rhythm, missing a breath, swallowing (a lot) of water, and a bit of tangle can be expected at this point. At this point:

- Relax, and keep swimming. Increase your stroke rate and ensure you recover with a high elbow rather than a low swinging stroke (more likely to get caught in another swimmer or the buoy).
- Kick kick kick in and around the buoy.
- Whatever you do, do not stop at the buoy. Keep moving!
- Lifting your head more often to sight and breath at this point is common, but watch out that your legs do not sink when the upper body lifts.

Exiting the water



Coming onto shore, if it's a sea swim use the wave or swell to body surf whilst you swim. Once you can feel the bottom with your hands then dolphin dives are a fast option to exit. Dive down and forward, touch the bottom with your hands then feet, and spring up and forward. When you land, reach back for the zip of your wetsuit first. Get your arms out, and pull the suit down to your waist. Next off is your hat and goggles. When you reach transition, kick off the rest of your suit whilst putting on your helmet. You cannot touch your bike until your helmet is on and fastened (rule).

Warm down

Like any training session use a similar post-race warm down strategy:

1. Cover up, stay warm so put on a tracksuit etc.
2. Refuel and rehydrate as necessary with a protein/ carbohydrate balanced food and or drink.
3. Perform an active cool down and some stretching as necessary before having a shower and getting into dry clothes.
4. Attend to your transition point to retrieve your kit.
5. Debrief with your coach.