

HUDSON VALLEY TRIATHLON CLUB

5k's Equal Speed

By Mark Wilson-Triathlon Coach

This spring, enter several local 5k's to boost your racing speed for the 2005 Triathlon Season. Most likely your 3.1 mile race speed is faster than your 5k time at the end of a swim, bike, and run event. It's a legitimate speed workout! The recovery time is usually minimal allowing you to get right back to your training plan; plus or minus an hour, here and there for optimal lactic acid removal.

The key, however, is not to race too often! During the latter stages of your "base" it's great to run fast. But remember, the point of your base building is for endurance, not peaking or sharpening. Racing 1 or maybe 2 times each month is the most you'd want to compete. The rest of the time should be endurance, "tempo" and "sub-threshold" type runs for maximal aerobic speed development.

How does one develop maximum aerobic speed? It's maybe the most nerve-wracking activity for a hyper triathlete to learn. Back off the pace a bit and enjoy the ride! Whenever my athletes get antsy to go fast during the winter months I'll ask them when their next race is and the usual response is "June." It's usually November, December or January. The point is, keep that heart rate (HR) down until it's really necessary to raise it for race specificity. The worse shape you're in the more important it is to keep it down, conversely, the better shape you're in the higher you can keep it over the winter but still being sure that your workouts are NOT race efforts. It just takes too long to recover and you can't get in other workouts due to recovery needs!

For instance, you may want to complete 3 weeks of base with a long run on each weekend of 1 hour, 1 ½ hours and 2 hours; nice-'n'-easy. Then, on the fourth week enter the local 5k. Let's say you run a 21:30 for this effort and it's 1:30 off your personal record (PR). Hey, no pressure, the season is 5 months away. You train another 2-3 weeks, yet you place 1 tempo run (4 x 5 min @ xx HR) in addition to the long runs on either Saturday or Sunday (2 hours). You register for another 5k and your time comes down a bit to 20:58. Okay, we're on our way! Another 2-3 weeks you add a track workout (4 x ¼ mile @ xx HR) plus the tempo and long runs. The next 5k you practically reach your PR time of 19:54 with a 20:01! Congratulations. You see, progress is gradual and SEEMS slow, but in actuality how long did it take to get back to your PR time? Yep, 7-9 weeks! It's steady progression and commitment to the plan that will make the difference for your triathlon season.

However, let's say you don't reach your personal record by the third 5k. So what! You've put some speed in and it's just gonna take another few weeks to get you back again. There are so many factors that can interrupt one's training schedule (especially if you're not a professional athlete) it's not worth beating yourself up over one or two "slow" races. Remember, these races are really tune-ups for the tri-season anyway. So

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train smart, quickly (but not too quickly) and get some 5k's under your belt for 2005. You'll be glad you did. See ya out there!

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