

HUDSON VALLEY TRIATHLON CLUB

Connecting the Dots

By Mark Wilson-Triathlon Coach

Are you satisfied with your race results? Do you feel like there's something missing in your training that's keeping you from performing at your best; speed workouts, long days, etc? Is your nutrition plan optimal for the races on your schedule? Are you overtraining or under-training? These are questions you can ask yourself when the race is over and you're driving home trying to understand what went well and what didn't. It's important to be honest regarding your strengths and weaknesses, and make an overall assessment about your results adjusting where necessary to reach your highest athletic potential. Let's explore a bit deeper.

If you would like to go faster than last year in your races then ask yourself questions like, "Where can I improve the most?" Or maybe phrase the question like this, "What do I need to change to improve as a triathlete?" The more questions you ask of yourself the more answers you'll get, but always keep them positive. Asking yourself, "Why do I suck?" is not the most self-supportive inner dialogue.

One of the answers to your questioning may be that you are avoiding the necessary workouts to raise the bar in your race efforts. For instance, if you are always last out of the water, it is evident the swim needs some work. But let's say you're pretty decent at all three disciplines, but you notice that your bike ranking at most of your events seems to be the lagging leg. Maybe you need to lift weights for the lower body during the winter, ride more hills throughout the spring/summer, or join a local bike group to improve your cycling skills and speed development. Making these seemingly small changes in your approach to your riding can create big gains as the season progresses as well as some residual progress in your running, too.

Nutrition can be one of the most daunting aspects regarding training and racing. Who's right and what's right for you? The truth has to be discovered by you or it just won't stick. The most obvious is that simple sugars (candy bars, soda, cakes, alcohol, etc.) are really awful for your health and needless to say, your athletic performance. You ask, "But what about all the carbs I need?" There's an alternative to the junk we've been "taught" to eat as young adults, but it's up to us to refuse to participate in the destruction of our health and therefore become successful athletes and important role models for those around us. Trust me, everyone in your life is watching your habits, so be a good influence and eat well to be well. Bottom line; complex carbohydrates such as whole grains in addition to adequate amounts of lean protein builds a strong and efficient human body.

Lastly, you must ask yourself honestly if you are prone to over or under training. Many athletes are unable to make such an assessment due to their lack of experience. Obviously, this is where a coach can help immensely, but for those of you who have been

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in the sport a few years this question is critical for your future success in triathlon or any sport. For the under-training athlete evidence like being able to talk during a 5k road race means you're simply not pushing hard enough, which is fine, but not if you intend to set a new PR (personal record). For instance, the same athlete may only run 4 easy aerobic runs a week with their HR (heart rate) hovering around 130 beats per minute. Once again, this is fine for someone who intends to maintain weight and "have fun" but will rarely aid one's attempt to reach their highest athletic potential. On the other hand, if you are an over-training athlete injury has become a daily occurrence for you. Habitually nursing the Achilles, hamstring or lower back due to training stresses is an obvious sign you're over doing it. If you find yourself in a haze throughout the day at work or simply unable to stay awake, you may be experiencing signals that the body needs a day or two off; don't worry, you're not going to lose any of your fitness. In fact, you'll come back stronger the next day out. Wouldn't that be nice?

Ask yourself positive questions and you'll receive a positive answer and solution. As the answers arrive, "connect the dots" and you'll discover a whole new level of intensity and success you could only dream of previously. See ya out there!

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