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What Motivates You?

We all have different reasons and motivations for competing or participating in triathlons. If you take a moment, you might think about yours. We recently saw someone's kiddo at a triathlon holding up a sign saying, "YOU PAID FOR THIS." We bet that a lot of athletes, at that moment towards the end of a long, hot run, were asking themselves why. Why did I do this? I feel miserable. But, not long afterwards, they were probably already talking to their buddies about the next race.

So, why do you do this? You might say that it's a simple finish, or the shiny participation medal, the T-shirt, the accomplishment, or staying in shape. You might even admit that you have an "adversary" with whom you engage in friendly (or not-so-friendly) competition. You've probably been asked this before. But, have you ever thought about why these things inspire you? What really motivates you?

There are two types of motivation, according to psychologists: extrinsic and intrinsic.

Extrinsic motivation comes from the external world, or outside of a person, which would involve some kind of reward or end result. Do you find yourself only signing up for races with finishers' medals, for example? A medal (reward) is an example of an extrinsic motivator. Ever meet someone who seems to be focused on "beating" a rival? That rivalry is also a good example. Are you often thinking about being "fast" or how you can get "faster?" Are you already thinking about an Ironman? Dreaming about getting your picture taken as you cross that finish line? Imagining yourself on the podium? Those rewards are all extrinsic. What does being "fast" really mean, anyway? It likely means you want to be like your heroes, or what you perceive as being stronger than others or stronger than you are now. But, to reach those goals you have to train first, which necessitates discipline, commitment, and consistency (and a knack for time management!). This involves a lengthy process, and there are no shortcuts.

To succeed in the process, we need intrinsic motivation. This type of motivation comes from within a person. An intrinsically motivated person truly loves the process of what they do, and they do not think about the reward as much. A person in pursuit of higher education, for example, loves to read about their field and discover new things. Their goal is not simply to get "piece of paper" or money. It's about a passion for their field. Likewise, think about a distance runner or an ultra runner. Just like the tireless academic who loves to read, the ultra runner loves the process of training. In other words, they simply love to run. No finisher medal or kudos on Facebook will be enough of a motivator to get this person through the training it takes to finish a 100-mile race. Notice, we said "training." The training is the bulk of the task. If you hate the training (the process), your goals will be more difficult to reach, and you may be more likely to quit out of frustration or get an injury.

How can you use this information? We are all motivated by a combination of intrinsic and extrinsic factors. However, those who tend to stick with something over the long-term tend to love the process of that task. Think about something you have done for a long time. What do you love about it? With that in mind, think about why you are in the sport of triathlon. What do you love about training? One successful strategy is to incorporate mindfulness in your training. In other words, practice being in the present moment. In the swim, for example, feel the cool water flow over your skin. Don't let anxiety take over your mind. Don't think about speed, medals, what your rival is doing, or what your friends on social media will think. Relax and simply enjoy it. Feel the breeze while you are riding your bike. Take in the colors and smells of fall. Don't worry about being fast or stare at your computer (look out for that squirrel!). Focus on becoming an expert at handling your bike. Notice the need to switch gears, and let the bike become a part of you as you learn to click the gear levers while feeling the changes in elevation. Feel the "wheeeeeee" as you coast or pedal down those hills, feel the strain in your muscles as you use your strength to peddle up them. While running, notice the trees, the birds, squirrels, and if you're a night owl, the hum of the cricket frogs, cicadas, and barred owls. If it's winter, enjoy the crunch of snow under your feet. At night, take in the amazing sight of starlight and moonlight reflecting off the snow. Focus on your stride, feel the sweat on your skin. Feel the power of your body carrying you. Appreciate your legs. Take the joy from that feeling and hold it. Relax. Breathe.

If you can do this, you will want to train. You will no longer dread the process; you will fall in love with it. Medals might or might not be there. Rivals will come and go. Speed will come as you train and go as you age. But, the process is always there. The problem with external motivators is that when they are gone, so is your motivation. Therefore, if they are your primary motivators, you probably will not train consistently. You may even quit entirely when, for example, a "rival" gets injured or retires from the sport. However, if you are more intrinsically motivated, or if you can learn to be, you will be more likely to find success as you define it. You will be more likely to train consistently and bounce back after bad days because your love for the process will overcome your frustration. As you age, you will be able to adapt and re-evaluate your goals, find new joys in training, maintain your health, and achieve longevity in the sport.

**Try it: when you log your next workout, note something about how you feel or something awesome you noticed during your workout. Happy training!*



Triathlon tips...

If you can, draft behind somebody going at a similar pace to save energy. Don't lift your head repeatedly to keep an eye on your drafter, just look for and follow the bubbles.

Triathlon tips...

If your legs tighten up, stand up on the pedals to stretch out your calves and hamstrings.



Staying in Shape in the Off-Season

It's that time of year again...the last triathlons are wrapping up, and the air is getting cooler. Soon, it will probably be too cold to train outdoors. Some take the cold as a challenge, or even prefer it to training outdoors in the summer heat. A few have even been known to don a ski suit and head out on a winter bike ride. However, if that's not your style, your only option is to train indoors. What to do if you hate the bike trainer, or dread the treadmill?

Since you are limited to more indoor training, winter is an excellent time to work on your swim. If you were more focused on the bike and run during the warmer months, don't despair. Use it as an opportunity to balance your training with swimming and other indoor exercise such as yoga and weights. Varying your routine is important in order to increase your overall strength, build supporting muscles, and avoid muscle imbalances, which can cause injury.

As triathlon season ends, trail running season is beginning. Trail running is an excellent way for triathletes to vary their training. Running on trails exercises your balance, stamina, and builds leg strength. Since you are not running on a flat surface, you are using different muscles at varying intensities as you navigate obstacles and changing terrain. The skills you use are similar to those used in triathlon: high level of focus, vigilance and awareness of your surroundings, ability to speed up and slow down your pace as needed, ability to adapt to changes, balance, coordination, and consideration of the athletes around you. If you love triathlon gadgets, there are even some gadgets you can get for trail running! Headlamps, vests, and shoes with a rock plate and good traction are just some of the fun things you can use. The nice thing is, however, that you don't need gadgets, and trail running is relatively inexpensive. There are trail events in the Midwest throughout the fall, winter, and spring. What to wear on snow? Trail shoes with good lugs on the soles will do.

The main point when looking for a way to stay in shape comes back to intrinsic motivation. Find something you enjoy doing. If you just can't get enough of swim, bike, and run, then stick with that and adapt your training to the weather and off-season. But, be sure to scale it back and take care of yourself. For example, being at "race weight" all year long is not healthy. Go ahead and eat that bratwurst. Have a piece of cake, in moderation. Are there any nagging minor injuries you've been ignoring? Now (and probably before now) is the time to go to the doc. If you keep ignoring those nagging aches and pains, they can turn into major injuries later.

If you're a little burned out, you might want to change your focus for a few months. If you are burned out now, you will be even more burned out by spring if you don't take a break from swim, bike and run. No one wants to start the season feeling tired and unmotivated. By finding another activity, you will at least stay in shape. Total rest for the winter, however, is not advised if you want to stay healthy and improve next season. So, go ahead and try that Zumba class, join a friend for a trail run, or finally go to a yoga class you love but haven't had time for. Take a swim lesson, get back into your weightlifting routine, or try Pilates. Believe it or not, even walking is a great way to switch things up. Take a rest, find something you like, but don't quit!

**Try it: use the off-season as an opportunity to take a swim lesson!*



Inspiration Station:

Ashleigh Koerner -

Coming back to the sport after two pregnancies

Ashleigh Koerner played softball as a youngster, but she was not too active in sports as a young adult until she started running in 2008. After a year of running, she transitioned to the sport of triathlon in 2009. She very slowly built up endurance and race length, and simply enjoyed the process of training. As she trained more, she naturally gained strength and speed. After a couple of years of racing, she completed Ironman 70.3 Racine and Ironman Louisville in 2011. Not long after her Ironman, she became pregnant with her first child, Cam.

When she got pregnant, Ashleigh did not change her training at first. Her body was able to handle all three sports as usual, and she even completed two triathlons that season. However, at around the 6th month, she could no longer bike or run. Swimming became her focus for the rest of the pregnancy. After giving birth to Cam, she signed up for Ironman 70.3 Boulder. She was slower, but she finished and incorporated a walk/run strategy for the last leg. She continued to feel well and completed a few half marathons and sprint triathlons soon afterwards. Slowly, she built her fitness back up.

In 2015, Lily was born. Just before the pregnancy, she injured her hip. With the injury and the pregnancy, she could no longer train. Determined to keep her fitness, she did yoga religiously throughout her pregnancy. Coming back to triathlon this time was more of a challenge because she could not train for such a long period of time. She did not race at all in 2015.

In 2016, Ashleigh tried to come back, but had gained about 40 lbs of extra weight with Lily. And, the hip injury she had been nursing morphed into a serious injury. She was sidelined. Physical therapy, cortisone injections, and slow strength training became her routine. Her physical therapist noticed she was very weak in her glutes and hips, so she focused on strengthening those areas, which helped tremendously. She joined Orange Theory in 2017 to build her strength. They have a training program that has worked very well to finally build her strength back up. "They worked on my core strength and my other weaknesses. It really worked well, and I am finally running and doing triathlons again. I just did the Chicago Marathon and am very happy with my time," she says.

Ashleigh says her nutrition did not change much, but when she was trying to lose weight after Lily, she tried to eat a little healthier. "Part of the issue was extended breastfeeding after both kids. As soon as breastfeeding ended, the pounds just melted off. I generally try to avoid sweets, too, but if someone has cake at work or something, I'll eat it."

So, how did she stay motivated through all of that? "Running and triathlons are such a big part of me. I mean, I think about it all the time and I've never considered quitting. I love training and how it makes me feel healthy," she says. She has had to adjust the way she trains quite a bit. Now, she uses a jogging stroller, for example, and includes her kids when she can. Cam is finally old enough to join her on some of her shorter runs. "Those are nice recovery runs for me. We run/walk and he loves it. It's become so routine for him, he thinks all moms run!" She mostly runs now, because it is easiest to fit in with having young kids. "I can just step out my door and run, unlike swimming and biking. It's much easier to fit in a run in the morning while the kids are still asleep than to go for a swim or bike in the evening when the kids and my husband are awake. In the evening, it's important for me to spend time with them."

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When does she run? "I get up at 3:00 a.m. to fit a run in before work," she says. Her shift starts at 6:30 a.m., so she starts her run by 4:00. In order to do that, the whole family is usually in bed early. "We have a pretty strict bedtime of 7:00 p.m. It's important to have a supportive family when you are training. My husband and my parents help a lot with the kids. If it weren't for their help, I wouldn't have been able to do the Chicago Marathon this year. When you have a family, everyone has to adjust and be supportive of your training or it will be a lot harder."

Even though her priorities have changed a lot in the past few years, Ashleigh has found a way to adjust and continue to incorporate training into daily life. "My top priority is babies now," she says, "so that is a change from a few years ago. But, I still love training and racing. I like to see how I'm improving. The strength training program at Orange Theory made a huge difference in my ability to come back to the sport." She says she feels her motivations are more intrinsic. She has noticed the influence her training is having on her kids, without even trying to influence them. She loves that her kids ask her how her "race" was when she comes back from a training run. "It doesn't even cross their minds that running isn't part of normal everyday life. I love that."

What words of wisdom does she have for others considering coming back after children? "Everyone is different, everyone's body is different, and everyone will need a different amount of time. Don't rush, go at your own pace. Throw out your expectations and be patient. Take things step by step. You will have to change your workouts at times because unexpected things will pop up. But, just because you can't get in that long training workout you planned doesn't mean you have to skip it altogether. Getting in a shorter workout, even if it's just 10-15 minutes, is better than no workout at all. For example, you might not get in the long run you hoped for, but maybe you can do just a mile or two, or do something else - like yoga - instead."

This year, Ashleigh feels like she is finally back in her element. What's in store for her in 2019? "I would really like to do another Half Ironman, and some local triathlons," she says. Top on her list, besides staying healthy? "I would really like my kids to see me finish. That would be great."

**Takeaway tip: If you can be flexible, you can return to training after a big change in your life. It's ok to put your family first, or to prioritize something new. Change your mindset to be more flexible and adaptable. Be willing to change or shorten workouts and ask for help. Remember that your family is adjusting to your needs as well and acknowledge their sacrifices. Include them when you can. Get rid of the "all-or-nothing" mindset that so often plagues us as human beings. If you don't have time for a bike ride, run a mile or two instead or do a short strength routine. Even a short training session is better than no training at all. Take things step-by-step and be kind to yourself. You, too, can make a comeback!*

**Try it: If you are having trouble leaving the house for bike rides, invest in a bike trainer. It's also great for winter training!
(Note: we recommend putting the trainer in a place where small children - and tiny fingers! - cannot access it.)*



Dan Dungan: Local Legacy

You may have met Dan Dungan at the local time trials in New City, at a triathlon, or at the pool at Master Swim. If you have been in the triathlon community for very long, you may know that he is one of those athletes whom many of us admire and whose performance and sportsmanship we aspire to emulate. He carries himself with a quiet humility, never boastful of his accomplishments; but Dan is a bit of a "diamond in the rough" when it comes to triathletes.. For our interview, Dan opened up a bit and answered some of our most burning questions.



How long have you been in the sport of triathlon? What led you to it?

I've participated in triathlon for 20 years. An off-handed bet from a former triathlete who dared me to try a Tri led me to give the sport a go.

What is your favorite part of the sport? (training, racing, or something else?)

Cycling is my favorite sport, followed closely by running. I prefer racing as much as possible because it tends to validate my training protocol.

Has your family always been supportive? How has your family helped you with your pursuits?

Early on, my family viewed it as a novelty expecting me to make a swift exit. Well, that naturally didn't happen. Overall, they are supportive and encourage me to continue.

Was Kona a goal you had, or did it just happen as you trained more and more? How did it feel to get there finally?

Kona qualification was always the goal, along with 70.3 World Championships. Over the years, I fell short for a Kona slot by one place five times. My last Kona campaign was in 2014 with a 2nd place at Ironman Texas, and then on to Kona later that year. Due to health complications, since cured, I tend to focus more on shorter events these days.

Did getting to Kona change your motivation in any way? How did the actual experience compare to your expectations?

My first time at Kona was just such an excellent experience with zero expectations other than a finish. Later, I wanted to compete at Kona, but the caliber and depth of athletes are so high and complete. In hindsight, I was way out of my league to think I could ever be competitive at Kona.

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How has your motivation and training evolved throughout the years? Was there anything in particular that changed your course?

Motivation is rarely an issue with me. Once I set my focus, then I am all in. My all-in attitude is a character flaw I have which can also become a negative if not managed. One takeaway I'd like to share: more is just more. In the context of training, more training volume is not the answer. Likewise, more training intensity is just more and not the answer. Once I discovered the real value of more recovery time, as in time to absorb and recover from training, then real gains were made with my race results. Following an online coaching plan or any cyber plan from a remote coach can be attractive, but it can also be problematic. What is not intuitive with these plans is fatigue generation and the lack of a remote coach's ability to understand the athlete. Every single athlete is unique and cannot be classified in segmented groups as these plans tend to do. Applying training load to a tired body is adding nothing of value. Yes, you ticked the box off your online training plan, but how are your performance metrics? My experience has taught me that race performance validates training. Plan structure and session placement are of great value with any program, but it is important to remember to keep fatigue management in mind.

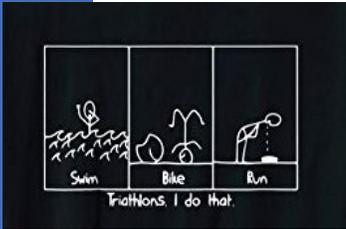
What are your current and future goals in the sport?

I am approaching the sunset of my racing days. I continue to think I have one more Kona campaign within in me; that may or may not be an illusion...stay tuned!

Takeaway tips: Proper rest is part of effective training. Without enough sleep and proper recovery time, your body will start to break down and you will start to slow down and increase your injury risk. Also remember that every athlete is a unique individual, with unique physiology and mechanics. Don't expect to be able to follow someone else's training plan without considering your unique needs. Pay attention to your own training, listen to your own body, and avoid comparison to others.



OOPS! Anonymous Race Bloopers



"I was running late to the swim start, and in my rush to get my trisuit on, I broke the zipper on the inner bra. I had to run back to the expo to try to find a new suit, but there were none in my size. The only one close was an XS; it was stretched out from people trying it on. I squeezed into it, ran back to the start, and, luckily, they had delayed it a few minutes due to weather. I made it, looking a bit like a sausage, and I had one of my worst races ever because I was so uncomfortable. Between the suit mishap and some bad food, I ended up getting sick at the end."

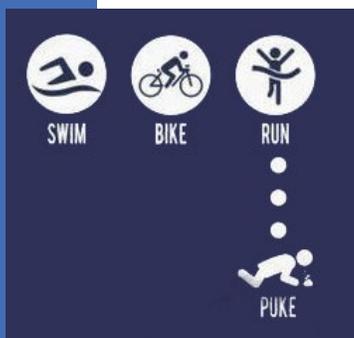


"I'm anemic, so I started eating peanut butter packets during races. I found these little peanut butter packets that were perfect! They worked well on the bike, but I hadn't tried them on the run. So, when did I decide to try it? During a half ironman - bad decision. I took out a packet and opened it in transition. I carried it out on the run and squirted some in my mouth right before running up a big hill. I tried to swallow it, but my mouth was so dry it wouldn't go down. So, there I was, trying to run up a hill, with peanut butter in my mouth gagging me and all over my face. I started choking and everyone was staring at me in horror. I spit some out and it went all over me. I looked like I had puked all over myself. So stupid!"



"You know that cardinal rule that you are never supposed to break - don't try anything new in a race. Well, on race day, without thinking, I used a new sunscreen. But, this one had something in it that made my face really greasy. My goggles wouldn't stick, so I ended up basically doggy paddling the entire swim."

"I heard that in long races, some people just pee on their bikes to save time. I hesitated, but I decided to do it in my Ironman. It ran all over me, down my legs, on my bike, all over my bike shoes. It was just gross. I don't care how much time it takes to stop, I'm never doing that again. It stunk, and it took me hours to clean it all off my bike and my gear."



Triathlon tips...

Train what's behind you. "A strong butt is the key to a happy life when it comes to running." That's straight from Jordan D. Metz, MD, sports medicine physician at NYC's Hospital for Special Surgery and Triathlete contributor. How so? Strength in the glutes keeps the pelvis from tilting from side to side (among other things) and has the potential to eliminate some classic running injuries including IT band friction syndrome. Work with a coach or physical therapist to determine which strengthening exercises are exactly right for you.

RESOURCES

Some upcoming trail events in the Midwest:

Abe's Trail Trek: Nov 17th

triharderpromotions.com

Lincoln's New Salem State Park near Petersburg, IL

Pere Marquette Trail Run: Dec 8th

teamgodzilla.org (Metro Tri Club)

Pere Marquette State Park, IL

Siberian Express Trail Run: Jan 6th

kennekukroadrunners.com

Danville, IL

Frozen Gnome Trail Races: Jan 12th

runfrozengnome.com

Crystal Lake, IL

Abominable Snow Race: Feb 2nd & 3rd

abominablesnowrace.com

Devils' Head Ski Resort (an obstacle course for the more adventurous souls), WI

Clinton Lake Ultra: March 23rd

secondwindrunningclub.com

DeWitt, IL (this is a 30-mile event)

Allerton Trails Half Marathon and 10k: April (TBD)

allertonraces.com

Monticello, IL

The first local triathlon in 2019 will be the Pioneer Sprint Triathlon in Petersburg, IL. Check for details at triharderpromotions.com.

If you are interested in a trail race/vacation, check out trailrunner.com or vacationraces.com

Other Resources:

Find a USAT-certified coach at: membership.usatriathlon.org

Swim Lessons: Mary Beth Stevens offers group and private lessons: hmandmb@comcast.net or (217)-494-2613

Master Swim at Eisenhower Pool - All levels welcome. Call (217)-525-8847 for details. Also visit: www.springfieldparks.org/facilities/aquatic/eisenhower.aspx

Ahh Yoga (contemporary yoga, meditation) ahhyoga.net

Trailhead Healing Arts (traditional yoga and ayurveda, meditation) trailheadcenter.org



Triathlon tips...

If you head out the door and your knee hurts, don't push through it because then all of a sudden you're injured and you are out. Stop exercising and take a couple of days off rather than be out a couple of weeks.