



# Choosing Your Race Targets

Article by Coach Sonni Dyer

These days, all you need to do is go online to view just how many races there are for you to choose from next year. And while it's GREAT that the growth of endurance sports has exploded, it presents some tough choices to every triathlete, duathlete, runner, and cyclist. In short, we almost have TOO many races to choose from!!

## Common questions are:

- How do I know which events to schedule?
- How many should I plan on making up my season?
- How do I best USE the events to meet my goals?
- Which races do I target as "priority" events?
- .....And finally,
- Knowing that so many events fill-up quickly, how do I GET IN my chosen events?

All are worthwhile questions.

## **Remembering what's important**

Each season should have a "focus".

Some folks value competition against others. Most simply want to compete against themselves. Some relish the challenge of working their way up to longer and longer events. While yet others *USE* events as family outings, setting an example for their kids that says, "Fitness is a lifestyle."

Whatever race schedule YOU chose for yourself, be sure that it:

- a) is true to your reason for participating at all
- b) serves to achieve "BALANCE" in OTHER areas of your life

## **Season Planning**

Just like each RACE should have a purpose, the SEASON should have a single primary target as well.

It wouldn't hurt to sit down and ask yourself, "In December of 2004, what single accomplishment would I like to have achieved in the races I went to during the course of the year?"

Is it to place in your age-group in a single race? Better your time from the previous year in that race? Place top-5 in a SERIES of races (like the NC-Tri Series)? FINISH a half-ironman?

Once you've determined what SINGLE thing you'd like to accomplish in the season, now you've created a measuring-stick by which you can weigh all other plans.

Caution: If you choose 2 or 3 "season" objectives, you risk becoming "jack of them all" and "master of none". Many times secondary goals **are** compatible with the season-goal, but not always. It's then that you'll need to ask, "What's most important?"

## **Individual Race Targets**

When choosing actual races you get down to the nitty-gritty of sequencing a season.

If your "season-goal" is to compete in one of the three tri-series (*NC-tri-Series, Palmetto/SC-tri-series, or the new Endurance-Magazine Developmental series*), you'll be looking @ race-weights and how they match up with your abilities at given race-distances. Another factor to weigh is how the races are spaced among one another.

Just because racing 3 weekends in a row is possible.....it doesn't leave much room for training. And a race or two may suffer.

Other factors in choosing races may be, **drive-time** to and from the race, **wetsuit event or not**, likely **heat** due to an events start-time, or even **whether it's a low key event** w/ 150 to 250 participants or an event that will draw 800+ competitors.



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Think of selecting events you'll race at as following cycles of training where you:

- 1)-BUILD your strength (through good ole fashioned VOLUME training)...rest then race.
- 2)-MOLD that strength into race-like fitness (through higher intensity hard work sessions)...rest then race
- 3)-and SHARPEN that fitness (through a peak build and subsequent taper) ...culminating in a "tapered-for" & prioritized race.

Your goal is to cycle through this 1-2-3 sequence 2 to 3 times a season getting stronger, faster, and more comfortable each time.

The secret to choosing races is to match the possible events to this sequence.

## ***Avoiding Over-racing***

Every single year I struggle to explain to A LOT of athletes how racing TOO much can hamper performances in targeted events.

In 2003, Dan Peairs raced 14 times in his first 12 weeks that I coached him! [Many were bike races, 2-3 a weekend.] I didn't object until I was absolutely certain that it had taken its toll on him for his A-races. And, sure enough, it did.

Once we cut this aggressive schedule back (to about one-race-per-month), Dan came around and won the NC-Triathlon Series Elite Division.

The challenge w/ "over-racing" is that racing takes more recovery.....and actual training must often be sacrificed in the equation.

Moral of the story: BALANCE your training/racing mix.

One "rested-for" race per every 4 weeks is about right for most athletes. IF you race more than that, try your best not to eliminate training sessions to do so.

## ***Finishing Strong***

How many times have you gotten to the end of a season only to feel a bit burnt-out, travel-weary, and ready for winter?

It's never a bad idea to make your LAST event of the year ALSO your final "Priority race". If done correctly, you can culminate your season into your best finish by taking advantage of the entire season's volume and race-experience.

For some, "finishing strong" means hitting a distance they've never attempted....a half or full-Ironman. For others, it may be a personal-best performance at a given distance.

Whatever that final event will be for you.....see it as a way that you'll EARN your downtime when the results are in for 2004.

Choose wisely.

See you out there,

**Coach Sonni Dyer**

\*\*\*\*\*For more information on the [Studio7MultiSport](http://www.Studio7MultiSport.com) training programs, you can visit our website at [www.Studio7MultiSport.com](http://www.Studio7MultiSport.com) or email Sonni at [Sonni@Studio7multisport.com](mailto:Sonni@Studio7multisport.com) .