



# Getting On Base (Training Focus for Nov-Feb)

Article by Coach Sonni Dyer

**Getting on Base**.....It's no secret that it's the goal of baseball players and teenagers, alike. But I'll offer **5 strategies**, here, that make a triathlete's game-plan targeted towards a very deliberate and purposeful focus for the month's where there's no triathlon to be found.

I say "*purposeful and deliberate*" because that exactly what most people's off-season is not. Most will change very little in the way they train.....only alter the approach due to darkness or weather. If your goal is to improve from one season to the next, try these 5 points.

## 1- Address the 'weakest-link'..... first.

Ever seen that show, 'The Weakest Link'? Part of eliminating the 'weakest-link' was, first, *IDENTIFYING* that link.....and doing so with brutal honesty.

It's the same with yourself. First, you have to *IDENTIFY* your weakness. Now this is pretty easy for most. Simply go back to the race-results of the past season and check out which leg was your %-of-field or ranking the lowest. If you're like most, you'll spot a trend.

Now the hard part. It's not enough to simply identify the weakness. You have to ask yourself the possible reasons **WHY** it may have been the weakness.

For example, I once had a guy come to me who was very frustrated because, although he was a runner in high-school, his run was his weakest-link. After further investigating, I found that it wasn't a problem with his running at all.....it was an **endurance** issue that showed up late in races.....you got it.....on the run.

### Maybe a poor swim is as a result of:

- \*poor stroke-technique,
- \*a lack of strength,
- \*abysmal flexibility,
- \*or even anxiety about the 'melee' that most refer to a the "swim-start".

### A less-than-desirable bike leg could simply be:

- \*positioning that is off,
- \*a lack of strength/power that limits wattage-output,
- \*pedal technique that relies on ONE muscle group far too much...(rather than spreading the work-load among many)
- \*or poor muscular endurance that won't allow for sustained efforts

### If the run is the 'limiter', you may:

- \*be 'heel-1<sup>st</sup>' striking and working to overcome your own 'braking' w/ every step
- \*need to shed a few pounds
- \*need to change the way you approach your intensity on the bike
- \*address your leg-speed and your heart-rate efficiency at 'faster-than-race-pace' speeds
- \*simply need to develop better 'metabolic efficiency' for the late stages of a race

These are just examples. But you get the point. Don't just say, "I'm a weak swimmer." Consult with a friend or coach to add, ".....because of \_\_\_\_\_."

Once you've identified the REAL "weak-link".....then develop a **WEEKLY, consistent strategy** to address it in your training.....(and here's the key).....EVEN IF IT COMES AS A RESULT OF LESS TRAINING TIME DEVOTED TO A CURRENT STRENGTH.

**Case in point:** I don't ride the bike nearly as much as I used to. But I swim more & *more purposefully*. Sure, I may have lost 30sec to a minute over a 20k bike.....but I improved over 2minutes in a half-mile swim. In the end, it's a better deal.

### The final step in addressing the 'weakest-link' is to periodically test yourself in that leg.

- \*Maybe it's swimming 5 x 100yards on a specific time-interval and counting strokes to see if you've maintained form.
- \*Maybe it's running or cycling a set distance at a set heart-rate and seeing how the total time progresses.



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These test are your tools for feedback. They're the way you communicate with your body to see what's REALLY the result of your efforts.

## 2-Limit Heart-rate intensity.

The best explanation I've seen for this, recently, is one given by Chris Carmichael.....Lance Armstrong's coach. He says:

"I see a lot of triathletes focusing on getting their threshold up as high as possible. But there is a point of diminishing returns where they're not going see their threshold increase any more because they're kind-of 'tapped-out'. If your lactate-threshold is 85 to 90% of your Vo2-max, it's just **NOT** going to get any higher.

So what you've got to do now is go back and build a bigger engine, which means you've got to grow your Vo2, because 85-90% of a higher Vo2 means a higher lactate threshold."

In short, staying aerobic ensures that we're laying the foundation, metabolically, for future work and our **adaptation** to those future workloads.

## 3-Devote time, each week, to technique.

Improving your "economy of forward motion" is one of the quickest ways to improve. And not just in the water (where it's obvious), but on the bike (by pedaling in circles) and the run (w/ good stride mechanics), too.

The 'return on training time' devoted to movement-economy offers big gains at a very small 'cost' of recovery.

What to do?.....drill.....drill.....drill.....and then, drill some more. These can be done right in the middle of ANY workout. We (the TRImyCoach coaches) incorporate neuromuscular, drill specific sessions done on stationary trainers and treadmills.....and, of course, in the pool.

## 4-Do NOT 'over-race' in the base phase!

Do you know a "5k-Frank" who sees it as his mission to enter every road race within 60miles in his 'OFF-season'? Trouble with this is that, while he's collecting t-shirts, he's NOT building a foundation for anything....nor limiting heart-rate. Most of the time, he's either resting FOR a race or resting FROM a race. Not training.

Targeting a longish event (lower hr) like a marathon, half-marathon, or century ride is helpful if limited to one or two times over the winter. It can provide a focus for the Base-phase as well as serving as a measuring stick. But practice prudence in choosing when you schedule those efforts.

## 5-Cross-train

I realize that telling triathletes to "Cross-train" is like preaching to the choir. So let me clarify by offering more options.

\*Is there a local water-polo league? [...or master's swim meet?]

\*Mtn. biking is a GREAT way to work on pedal-stroke and handling.

\*Hit the weight room. "Muscular-Balance" is key in injury prevention. And you can possible eliminate a weak-link by lifting.

\*Trail-running (or in colder weather/climates....snow-shoeing or cross-country skiing) works parts of your stride you'll quickly realize you've neglected.

\*Even rec./church league sports like volley-ball, soccer, racquetball or basketball can provide a mental break while you maintain fitness. Just be careful of those lateral movements that can cause injury.

\*Aerobics, cardio-kick-boxing, and spinning classes work great as long as you can stay on YOUR hr-zone agenda.

**To conclude**, I recommend that every triathlete begin with the end in mind by asking the question: "**What do I want to have addressed in my base-phase as I'm standing on the starting line in that 1<sup>st</sup> race next season?**"

Then, have fun getting 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) .