



# Transition Tips For Raceday

Article by Sonni Dyer

Hang around at the social gathering that always gels after any triathlon and you're sure to hear tale after tale of how a competitor's "transitions" either made or broke a race. Everyone seems quick to realize the simple math of **2 options**:

- 1)-run 10seconds-per-mile faster for the closing 5k of a sprint-tri .....earning 30seconds  
or
- 2)-nailing **one** of the 2 transitions and saving the 30seconds there.....& then, attacking the run.

A GOOD pair of transitions (T-1 and T-2) can easily mean the difference of a whole minute at the end of the day. So ask yourself, " In the races I've done this year, what would happen if 1 full minute were deducted from each of my overall finish times?" It won't always mean a moving up a spot. But in some tighter races, it can mean several spots. See the point?

Often, the misconception is that blazing transitions are something that happens **DURING** a race. That's only half the battle. In fact, your speed in transition is largely determined by what you do **BEFORE** the race.

Check out the tips below and see how many "during-race seconds" you can defer to the time BEFORE the gun goes off.

## T-1 Area set-up

- 1- Arrive early to try and get an end-spot.....but worry not if you don't.
- 2- KNOW where your bike is in the "city" of bikes in any given transition area these days. Take the 'bee-line' to it.
- 3-Set-up the area so that what you reach for first is what's front and center.
- 4-If wet-suited, spray the outside of the forearms & lower legs w/ cooking spray. It saves HUGE time in peeling off the suit. (*You can also consider cutting the ankles of the suit in a tapered fashion so that it's removed lightning fast.*)
- 4- Try to set-up your bike next to a faster swimmer in your wave. Odds are that they'll be gone when you arrive. Now you're exiting unencumbered & with more space.
- 5- Rubber band your top helmet vent, upside down, to your aero-bars. Now, when you arrive @ the bike, you don't even have to bend down to hurry out. And your helmet stays put when the rack inevitably shakes from those before you. When you get to the rack, you tug it, snap the thin band, fasten the chin-strap..... and then haul.

## T-1 Exit

- 1- Run on your forefeet until your butt hits the saddle. Would you rather 100% of your bare foot surface be exposed to all the crazy things that hide on transition area "floors", or 30% of your foot area? Play the "what if" odds. ("**What if** I find that single piece of gravel or sole sand-spur in getting to the bike exit.")
- 2- If you currently put on your cycling shoes **at** the bike, **consider pre-mounting them to the pedals** and rubber-banding the heel-tabs (*or safety pin at the heel*). Then, after running out of T-1, you hop on, pedal with bare feet ON TOP of the shoes, and slip the feet in as you roll down the road. Now you're **REALLY** deferring "during race" time to before the race. OF COURSE this takes practice!! But I've timed as much as a 40second difference for athletes who did this for the first time .....unpolished.
- 3- Make absolutely certain that you've **pre-set the gears on the bike to a gear that you can BEGIN pedaling in**, from a dead-stop without falling over. Know that this is, (9 times out of 10), a **small-ring type gear**. After all, 95% of all transition areas exit on an uphill. Think about it. You just swam in a large body of water that pooled there because of gravity.



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## T-2 Entry and Exit

1- When 100yards away from the dismount line, un-strap your cycling shoes, take the feet out one at a time, and **pedal easily with feet on top of the shoes** that are still attached to the pedals. You're accomplishing 3 things simultaneously: a)-**getting out of the shoes**, b)-**resting before the run**, c)-**all while still moving forward on the bike**, coasting. This too, takes practice. But again, can mean as much as 20-40 seconds compared to running through t-2 w/ cycling shoes on and then sitting or bending to take them off. Time yourself sometime using BOTH methods ..... and practice, practice, practice.

2-**Use a number belt!** When you arrive at your rack, rack the bike, THEN unbuckle the helmet, slip the shoes on (*using baby power or Vaseline to ease foot entry*), then grab your number-belt & number, shades/hat and GO!! Don't stand there and dress before you run. You can attach everything AS you run.

- 4- **Leave T-2 running on your mid-foot or forefoot trying to mimic the foot-strike cadence that you've just used on the bike minutes earlier.** This transitions the legs MUCH more gradually into legs that actually feel like running. Leaving w/ a heel-fist foot-strike assures that you're over striding, having to overcome your own body's "braking", and prematurely fatiguing yourself with more excessive road "shock". Think of it as tip-toeing out until you hit your critical run pace. This is a pace that closely resembles your run-speed that does NOT follow a swim and bike.

Like we tell all athletes that we work with, "***It's not how fast you run. It's how fast you run off the bike!!***"

**Have fun. See you in the Transition area!**

**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) .