



# Coach-Athlete Q&A

A look at some coach-replies to common questions by topic.

**Q:** Sonni, I would like your input on my next bike purchase.

Quick background. I am completing my 4th year on a Quintana Roo Kilo. I purchased this bike with no guidance ... just thought that is what I needed at the time. I normally complete in 7-8 triathlons per season ... most in the North Carolina series. Pending on how my training goes, I like to finish up the season with the Duke 1/2 Ironman. I average 50 mile per week training on the bike (usually 2 rides ... short ride and one long ride)

I would love to train more ... but due to work, wife, kids, life, etc. the above description will be my routine for the next couple of years.

I attended one of your triathlon camps (Columbia, SC) last year. I definitely would like your assistance/expertise with my next bike purchase. Probably before the 2003 season. Spending cap would be \$1500 max. What should I be looking at ... mid/top level Cannondale; mid level Trek, Litespeed, back to the Quintana Roo.

THANKS for your time. A.C.

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**A:** Hey AC.....in looking for a tri-bike, I recommend that the following 'points' be weighted as follows in order of importance:

- 1-**positioning** (a)-correct sizing and b)-seat-tube angle and how this relates to YOUR build]
- 2-**\$-spent per REAL speed gained** (this includes how the bike comes equipped w/ components, wheels, aero-bars, etc...)
- 3-**comfort** (associated w/ geometry and frame material)
- 4-**aerodynamics** (tubing shapes & accessories)
- 5-**weight**
- 6-**aesthetics** (paint.....'cool-factor', if you'll have it for a long time)
- 7-**durability** (& how that relates to re-sell value)

Above.....#'s 2 through 7 can really be put in any order that is of personal preference to the athlete. I just offer MY opinion on this here.

**BUT**.....and hear this closely.....there is NO QUESTION (out of all my years of working in the tri-bike industry and now coaching athletes who BUY from that industry) that "positioning" is, by far the most crucial aspect. In other words, if you were to have to go \$200-\$400 over-budget, do so based on positioning characteristics rather than on paint, weight, tubing shapes, or components/wheels that can be added later. Or.....buy a great positioned framed (for you).....put cheap parts on it and replace them one-by one over the next few years.

NOW, what makes a great positioned frame?? In MY experience, it is one that:

**a) FITS!!!**.....& this isn't very hard, just watch out for 'bike-shop' guys who know **road-FIT**. This is very different than **TRI-FIT**.

& .....



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- b) allows for a seat-positioning of anywhere **from 75 to 76.5 degrees** (these #'s are based off of over 50+ lab-assessments and 130+bike fits we've done by measuring the result of wattage @ given fore-aft positions.....**WHILE** measuring the 'cost' in heart-rate of such positioning.....**AND** by marking the effects of this ideal 'fore-aft' on run-transition and speed. **Because it makes no sense to make your bike-split 1 minute faster while simultaneously making your run-split 2 minutes slower due to positioning.** And "bike-shop fitters" never get this.

Why 75 to 76.5 degrees?.....'sport-specific lever & leverage mechanics'. I won't go into this, here. Just trust me on this.

So what bikes offer 75 to 76.5 degree seat-tube angles? Well, know that standard road bikes are usually from 72 to 74 degrees while "Tri" bikes (in years past) were set @ 78+ degrees. Now, you can begin w/a 74 degree road-bike and get to 75. Or begin w/ a 78 degree tri-bike and go back to 77.....all w/ extreme saddle adjustments.

But the idea is to **NOT** have to go to extremes on the saddle rails to achieve optimum wattage output. This can change the handling and comfort of a bike.

So search for a few bikes that has a 75 or 76 seat-tube angle in your \$-range and w/ a perfect fit. At your size, you should be looking for 700c wheels, too. 650c is great for those (often women) under 5'6".....but @ 5'11", you'd pay a 'stability' price for sizing down on the wheels.

Bikes that I know of that fit the seat-tube angle criteria for ideal tri-usage (that are close to your \$-range):

- Cervelo p2k (adjustable seat-angles)
- Kestrel Talon (adjustable seat-angles)
- softrides (adjustable seat-angles)
- some Guru's
- and maybe the new 2003 Cannondales, but I've not seen their specs yet.
- QR Tequillo (700c versions)

MY opinion of which is th best of the above:

- 1-p2k (even if it's \$500 more than your budget.....you could buy lessor parts for it and upgrade as you go)
- 2-QR-TeQuillo (the best \$ of those above)
- 3-Kestrel Talon (comfortable, aero, beautiful.....but carbon isn't the most durable for re-sell 4 years from now)

Lot of info.....I hope this helps.

**Sonni**