

Preparation, patience and pertinacity: Smith's monthly guide could see you taste long-distance success in 2015



"Race day may seem a distant blip on the horizon, but right now is the perfect time to carefully plot your plan of attack for the coming months"

SIX-MONTH TRAINING PLAN



NOW'S THE TIME TO PLOT YOUR PATH TO IM SUCCESS IN 2015. HERE ARE SPENCER SMITH'S SIX-MONTHLY STEPS TO THE FINISH LINE...

With the payment made and the race date set in stone, it's difficult not to get carried away with over-exuberance right off the bat. The fact of the matter is, although race day may seem a distant blip on the horizon, right now is the perfect time to carefully plot your plan of attack for the coming months. Obviously all athletes are of varying ability, so this is a broad outline of the way I'd tackle the next six months leading up to the big day.

MONTH 1: ADAPTATION, CONSISTENCY, RHYTHM

The first month really is all about getting the body accustomed and adapted to the daily demands of consistent training. It's certainly not about setting off at breakneck speed, nor is it about trying to cover more mileage in a week, which you would've covered in a month at any other time of the year. The body may not yet be conditioned for the day in, day out aerobic demands you're throwing at it, so be patient. The train has just left the station, let's just settle in and slowly let the journey begin.

MONTH 2: ADAPTATION

With the first month under your belt, you've hopefully found yourself getting into a weekly groove, and although you may think now might be the time to ramp up the training volume, you'd be mistaken. I still like to keep the volume somewhat conservative, although I'd start to incorporate some intensity at Ironman pace and



TRAINING PLAN

Hold your horses: resist the urge to up intensity and volume right from the off

slightly above. All of the sessions you undertake should have a clear purpose and goal. If you're unsure why you're doing a particular training session or question its purpose, then change it or leave it out completely. More is not better.

MONTH 3: INCREASE VOLUME

With a good couple of months of training under your belt, now's a good time to increase the volume on both the bike and run. Not only should that increase happen with volume, but intensity as well. Longer (20 minutes up to one hour) segments at Ironman pacing and slightly above should be incorporated into your training. Unfortunately, I believe, there's a casualty with the volume increase on the bike and run, and that casualty is the swim. Don't panic. Try to keep a reasonable amount of volume with frequency, without getting too caught up with the intervals. Include a decent amount of pull and paddle work to help accelerate recovery of fatigued legs.

MONTH 4: RECOVER, TEST, RECOVER

It's vital during any period of prolonged training that recovery is incorporated into the programme. After 12 weeks of solid work (that should include rest and recovery days),

it's time to rest the body in terms of volume and let all the work completed soak in. It's important to note that you don't improve when you're training; it's when you're resting that the body reaps all the benefits of your hard work. This month should be split into two parts: the first half should be lighter on volume, but should still contain some intensity; the second part of the month should incorporate a race of some kind. I like to include a 70.3 or something in that region, so that I can use it as a benchmark of my form, and then use the backend of the month for recovery, not only from the race but in preparation for the coming weeks.

MONTH 5: HONING SESSIONS

With the body rejuvenated and hopefully a decent race under your belt, it's time to return to volume and intensity. The only difference is that this month is all about keying in on those specific sessions. The key sessions on the previous pages should certainly be done rested and not in close proximity to each other. The goal of each one of these sessions isn't only to prepare the body for the distance needed to complete the race, but also to see whether your expectations on race day are realistic. This is also a perfect time to test race-day nutrition, as the body will be under

stress similar to what will be experienced on race day, and to include those long, hard sessions with active recovery sessions in between to keep the body moving.

MONTH 6: IT'S TIME

This is when many athletes start to doubt their ability, their training, their equipment. It's when the brain starts to play games with the body. Every muscle twitch is analysed, every session scrutinised. This month should still incorporate some key sessions early on, but it's more about what you don't do.

The biggest problem I encounter with athletes is that, as the race draws closer, they keep wanting to test themselves in every session. Please don't - the training is in the bag, give the body a chance to perform come race day.

I like to have my last harder run 12-14 days out, and my last longer, harder ride with 9-10 days to go. The swim I find takes the least out of me, so I include a relatively hard session about a week from race start. During race week I tend to increase my carb intake slightly, while keeping the body moving with short, but controlled, efforts of intensity. The volume on race week is cut considerably in order for my body to ready itself for the biggest training day of the last six months... THE RACE! ■ 220