

Somerset Try-a-Tri



*“The perfect
beginner’s triathlon!”*

Hi everyone!

As things stand it looks as though the Try-a-Tri and Sprint Tri at Portishead Open Air Pool that we had to postpone from May 2020 will be able to go ahead on May 30th, 2021. As we expect some kind of covid-19 restrictions to still be in force at that time, we are planning for a slimmed-down event with 120 entrants so that we swim with only 3 per lane and space the transition area out more with 1m between bikes instead of the usual 50-60cm. We can also schedule the start times so that you are able to rack your bike and layout your kit without coming within 2m of another competitor.

This all means that we have to reduce the number of participants from the 160 who have rolled-over their entries from 2020 down to 120, so if you want to withdraw from the 2021 race and wait for things to be more “normal” in 2022, please get in touch. If we don’t get 40 voluntary deferrals/withdrawals we will have to cancel some entries on a last-in-first-out basis, which I deeply regret, but I hope you understand the reasons why. Any compulsory withdrawals will of course get a full refund.

Before I go into training tips for those of you who are new to triathlon, I have to caution that any advice from me or anyone else has to be read in conjunction with the latest edition of the ever-changing government guidance on outdoor/indoor exercise. Please bookmark the following links and check regularly to make sure any training sessions you plan do meet the requirements.

<https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>

<https://www.cyclinguk.org/news/coronavirus-advice-and-guidance-cycling-uk-member-and-affiliate-groups>

<https://www.britishtriathlon.org/covid-19>

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

TIPS Pt.1- HOW TO TRAIN FOR THE TRY-A TRI & SPRINT TRI

(The things beginners need to know)

This is article number 1 and as well as uploading it to our race website I'll be emailing it to all Try-a-Tri entrants and also to any entrants in the Sprint Distance event who indicated that it is going to be their first triathlon. Subsequent articles uploaded/emailed out to everyone will give info about Triathlon Transitions, Kit and Equipment, the Rules of Triathlon and finally your "Race Pack" with all that vital race day information.

As usual we are planning a Duathlon (running and cycling) in March and an Aquathlon (swimming and running) on in April as stepping stones to the Try-a-Tri which is on Sunday 30 May. These events will only cost £6.75 each as part of Triathlon England's "GO TRI" scheme. Details are at <http://uk.srichinmoyraces.org/multisport-events>

These events have been adjusted to meet the kind of covid-19 rules that were in place between-lockdowns in September 2020 – we were able to stage a duathlon then by implementing a staggered-start and having no gatherings for briefing or results. So long as restrictions are relaxed to about that same level, which we hope will have happened by late March, those 2-sport, beginner-friendly races will go ahead and will provide a great first step into multisport.

TRAINING FOR A TRY-A-TRI

Despite its name, the sport of triathlon actually includes four disciplines, not three. These are swimming, cycling, running and transition (the changeover from one sport to another). After writing an article about all 4 of these disciplines, I realised it was too much to digest all at once, so Transition will be covered in a separate message.

LOCKDOWN AND WHAT IT MEANS FOR TRAINING

Triathletes have been very lucky in southwest England when it comes to carrying on sensible training during the covid-19 restrictions. Wales and southeast England have experienced a tighter lockdown and as I write this pools are closed in the Tier/Level 4 areas of both England and Wales. I know not everyone will want to get outside and exercise while there is a pandemic happening, so I have included some advice on indoor training below. I am writing this from my home in Filton at the northern end of Bristol in December 2020 where right now the "rules" allow me to swim at my local pool so long as I pre-book my date and time. It is quite possible for most of us to do our long runs and rides solo without having to have any contact at all with others, but the rules here in my part of England do allow for a running partner and for bike rides in small groups, so there is nothing to stop us getting out there and training if we decide it's the right thing. Wherever you are based I hope you can find a way to train – fortunately the governments do seem to be prioritising exercise as one of the exceptions to the "stay at home" rule.

THE SWIM



The Try-a-Tri swim is 264 metres, or 8 lengths of the Portishead Open Air Pool (above). The Sprint Tri is a little longer at 400m. You can use any frontal stroke you like, but BTF rules do not permit backstroke. All you need to be able to do on race day is complete the distance without bumping into other swimmers or impeding them. There will be plenty of novice swimmers among the entrants so no-one will be judging your style.

Swimmers will be in lanes with others of a similar speed (according to the estimated swim times you have all submitted - you can send revised swim times up to late April if you find yourself getting faster in training). The 2021 event will be different to "normal" with a 2m-distanced queue for the swim, a more staggered start than usual and only 3 swimmers per lane.

Adult Improver sessions at your local pool are a good way to improve your swimming. Going to the pool twice a week is ideal - once a week to a lesson where you get some guidance, plus once a week on your own to practise what they have taught you. Having said that, if you go once a week on your own build up your sessions until you can swim 10 lengths or more without stopping, you should be ready for the race. At the time of writing, leisure centres / pools are open in many areas of England and I was swimming at my local pool's "dawn dippers" sessions before work right up until they closed for a Christmas break. Your local leisure centre should have a website where you can check what is on offer and book your sessions. If you are not comfortable going to a shared exercise space like a swimming

pool right now, you'll have to leave the swim training until later in the spring and concentrate on getting a good grounding in the other 2 sports for now (as they don't require any visit to a sports facility – just the open roads/pavements). Do check out your local pool's covid measures though as I was very impressed with the setup at mine – Filton Leisure Centre is offering 45 mins swim sessions for limited numbers followed by a 15 minute deep clean before the next "wave" comes in to swim. They also alternate the banks of lockers available so those can also be fully cleaned between sessions. I feel totally safe swimming there and it has been a massive help during lockdown to be able to keep my training going.

Training Aims:

1. Be able to swim approx. 250m (10 lengths of a standard leisure centre pool, or 5 of an Olympic pool) without feeling totally exhausted. Build up to this slowly but steadily with regular pool sessions of "lane swimming". If you have entered our longer "Sprint" event make that 400m (16 lengths of a standard pool or 8 of an Olympic size).
2. Usually I would advise any beginner triathlete to get confident in a lane with several other people by swimming at a busy time instead of having a lane all to yourself, but with only 3 per lane in our 2021 race you will have plenty of space. One thing you should do, though, is get to know your natural swimming pace so you can avoid starting too fast on race day (the most common mistake beginners make).
3. Get to know what it's like to interact with other swimmers - overtaking them and/or being overtaken by them without losing your rhythm. Right now in these covid times, most people who go lane-swimming are well used to noticing when the swimmer behind them has caught them up and wants to pass; stopping for a 5 second rest holding on to the end of the pool, to let the faster swimmer turn first and go ahead, is standard practice. We will recommend this on race day too so that faster swimmers don't get held up behind slower swimmers, while at the same time slower swimmers can stay relaxed and not feel pressured by the faster swimmer tailgating. You can rest and get your breath back facing away from the pool while the faster swimmer who has caught you up does their turn, then follow them up the pool taking advantage of their slipstream – both faster and slower swimmers will benefit from that pool etiquette and it's much easier than overtaking mid-lane.
4. If possible, go to the race venue and have a practice swim there. Get used to the temperature, the size of the lanes and the process of getting in and out at the shallow end. Use of steps is not permitted in a triathlon pool swim as only the end lanes have them – you need to be able to pull yourself up and out at the end of your lane so practice that as part of your training.
5. Confident swimmers who want to improve their speed can do the various "drills" (google "swim drills for triathletes" for more info) that improve technique, or get some

coaching/advice from a swim instructor. Beginner's just need to work on the basics (points 1-4).

Do all that and nothing will phase you on race day!

I'd advise everyone to read the British Triathlon Competition Rules some time so that nothing is new or surprising when you do the swim at our event. Jumping/diving into the pool is definitely not permitted, having a rest at the end of a length to get your breath back is totally fine, walking in the shallow end is not OK (you can stand and then start again if for any reason you have to stop). You don't have to do "tumble turns" but you can if you know how – they do improve your speed in a pool swim. Bear in mind that the shallow end of Portishead Pool is very shallow though and make sure you check out the depth before trying that racing turn move.

THE BIKE



Training for the cycle section should be focused on building the confidence and fitness necessary to complete the 17km / 11 mile course (or 25k if you have chosen the Sprint Distance). There will be some hills, so get used to climbing economically in your training. That means getting up the hills without being "finished" when you reach the top.

With practice you'll learn how fast you can go, both on the flat and up hills, without the effort becoming unsustainable. If you don't have a cycle computer that measures your miles, see if your phone has a distance measuring GPS app on it. Or you can measure your training route in a car. More info about what type of bike to use will be included in a separate article, but so long as your bike is roadworthy, of a standard size and doesn't have fixed gear (meaning you cannot freewheel on it) you should be fine.

If you are not keen to ride outside right now, training on a static bike will be a good foundation for your training. Alternatively you can get a Turbo Trainer or set of rollers so you can set up your usual, outdoor bike and train indoors on that. It can get quite boring but you can get your headphones on or watch something on a screen while you get the miles/minutes of training done if that helps! Indoor cycling is surprisingly hot work so you might want to open some windows and switch off your heating as well as draping a towel over your handlebars.

The popular cycling website Bike Radar has a guide to indoor training that you might want to take a look at:

<https://www.bikeradar.com/advice/fitness-and-training/beginners-guide-to-indoor-training-all-you-need-to-get-started/>

Training Aims:

1. Be able to cycle 17km/25km at a steady pace without feeling totally exhausted. On race day, you need to get off the bike with enough energy to run 4km/5km.
2. Starting out indoors or outside on cycle paths is fine, but you need to get comfortable around traffic as well as other cyclists. Graduate to the open road when you can.
3. Ride some hills. Don't "attack" them, just learn to get up them without being worn out at the top. It's normal to feel out of breath as you finish a climb, but you need to build your fitness up to the point where you can get your breath back again within a minute or two of reaching the top of a hill. In a triathlon race, you are allowed to dismount and push your bike up a hill if you need to, so long as you do so safely and without breaching the highway code.
4. When you feel confident on the road, why not get over to Portishead for a ride on the race route? You can find the route on the Map My Ride website and there is a course map on the race web site <http://uk.srichinmoyraces.org/triathlon>

THE RUN



The run is the simplest part of a triathlon, and in the Try-a-Tri it is only 4k (less than 3 miles). If you haven't done much running, or any running at all for that matter, remember the saying "don't try to run before you can walk". Most people start their running training that way - with brisk walking. Once you can walk briskly for half an hour, insert some short jogs into the middle section of your walking session, for example some 2-minute jogs interspersed with walking to get your breath back. Gradually increase the number of jogs and decrease the gaps between them - this will happen naturally as your fitness improves and your muscles get used to the activity.

I won't put a training program here, as there are plenty available online (just google "couch to 5k run program" or similar and you will find a few options). The Try-a-Tri course at Portishead is flat, so hill training for the run is not required.

If you are already a runner, the only thing unique to triathlon that you may want to practise is running straight after cycling. In the world of triathlon this is called *running off the bike*.

To get the hang of running off the bike, you just need to cycle until you can feel some fatigue in your leg muscles, then get off the bike and run straight away. The muscles you use on the bike will be warmed up and have the blood flowing through them nicely, while your different muscle groups used for running will be in the opposite state. The first part of the run can feel stiff and awkward. Practice helps your body get used to the change in

activities, and it starts to feel easier. Training sessions of this kind that involve two or more sports are called "Brick Sessions" and are favoured by experienced triathletes. For a beginner they aren't strictly needed - just the icing on the cake.

As with cycling, you can get your training started on the treadmill if you have one – Runners World have put together this beginner's guide to indoor running which has some useful tips: <https://www.runnersworld.com/beginner/a20847537/running-and-walking-on-the-treadmill/>

Training Aims:

1. Get used to walking/jogging/running the full race distance of 4km/5km. If you want race practice, we have a 2-mile running event in Bristol every May - details are on our web site below - you don't need to enter in advance, you can just come along and enter the race on the night:

<http://uk.srichinmoyraces.org/races/bristol>

2. If you have time and feel your running is going well, practise *running off the bike*. A good way to get experience of that would be to enter our beginner's duathlon event at Tockington – see website <http://uk.srichinmoyraces.org/multisport-events>

I think that's enough info to hit newby triathletes with in one go - contact me if you want to clarify anything. Remember there is a lot of info about the course on our race web site shown below. The bit most new triathletes are baffled by is "Transition" but I will publish a separate guide to that soon, and I'm happy to answer your questions any time.

GOOD LUCK WITH YOUR TRAINING, AND LET'S HOPE COVID-19 IS ON THE WAY OUT WHEN THE SUMMER COMES SO WE CAN GET OUT THERE AND DO TRIATHLON!

<http://uk.srichinmoyraces.org/triathlon>

Garga.sctc@zoho.com

07702 410797