

Expert advice

# SOLVED!

WORK OUT HOW MANY HOURS A WEEK YOU SHOULD TRAIN AND WHICH COMPONENTS TO UPGRADE IN ORDER TO GET YOUR BIKE IRONMAN-READY

Meet this month's experts

## Training

Garth Fox

Triathlete and cyclist



## Race advice

Jez Cox

Duathlete and former elite cyclist



QUESTION OF THE MONTH

## Training

# LESS WORK, MORE TRAINING

**Q** I've gone part time at work recently and, among other things, it gives me more time to train. The problem is I don't know how many hours I should be doing each week. At the moment I've been averaging about five or six hours but I could easily double that now. Are more hours better, and where is the cut-off point? How many hours do the pros do? Is there any research on this subject?  
Justin Styles, London

Garth Fox

Triathlete and cyclist



**PROFESSIONAL TRIATHLETES** typically train in the region of 15 to 30 hours per week, but it is worth remembering that they have taken many years to build up to that level of training. Also, the training objective of each session is far more relevant to their performance than the hours spent doing it. The right amount of training is the least amount

that gets you the results you want. That amount will differ from one individual to another.

The number of training hours you put in per week is a combination of workout duration and frequency, otherwise known as training volume. What you really want to be thinking about is your overall training load. This is the combination of volume and intensity, where intensity is how hard you are actually exercising compared with a reference point of, say, race pace. What



is exciting about your new work situation is that it allows you more time to recover. Any time you increase your training you need to think in terms of simultaneously increasing your recovery time.

The objective of any training programme is to challenge the systems of the body that underpin the specific demands of the chosen event, so that they adapt and improve their function. Therefore, if your season's goal is an Ironman, then larger volumes of training at lower intensities will be required to build the necessary endurance to get you through the distance. Equally, if your goal were a sprint triathlon then the training prescription would include more intensity and less overall volume.

What little research there has been into the area has shown that it is the intensity of training that is the better predictor of performance. Intuitively, this makes sense – if you want to race fast, you need to train fast. But then that begs the question, why not just train at high intensity all the time?

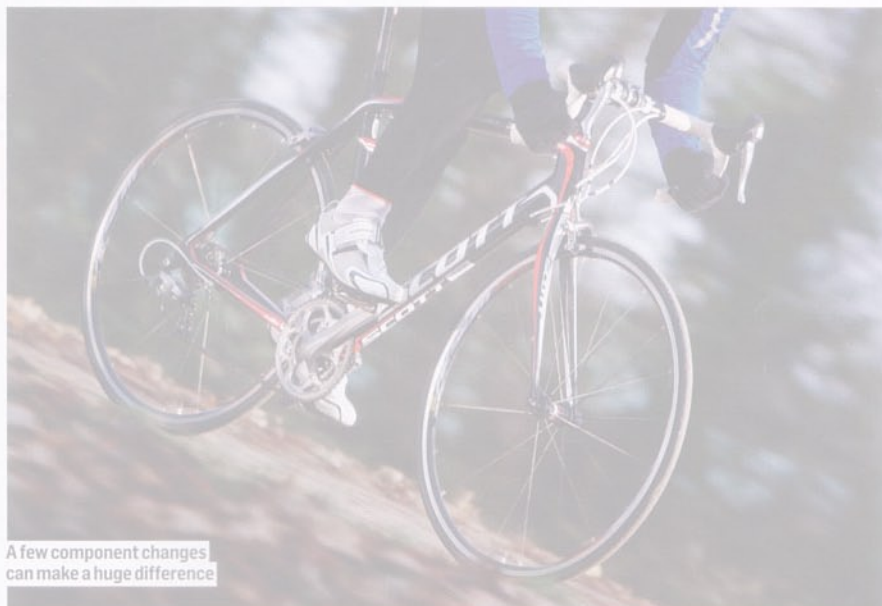
Low intensity training allows the soft tissue structures to strengthen and develops the basic conditioning needed for the more stressful, higher intensity sessions. Therefore to see improvement you need to include both, but the key is to introduce increases in training load progressively and always allow adequate recovery time. It is completely normal, even desirable, to feel some fatigue (although not exhaustion) after a training session or block. If you feel as fresh as a daisy then you can probably add more training load to your programme.

In conclusion, I suggest you think clearly about what it is you are training to achieve – whether that is getting faster in Olympic-distance races, completing an Ironman or simply targeting your first sprint race. Then think in terms of building the required level of endurance through steady increases in low intensity volume. After that, you can add some slightly harder sessions that are relevant to your chosen event and race pace.

## Ask our experts

### Send your questions to:

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A few component changes can make a huge difference

### Race advice

## BIKE UPGRADES FOR IRONMAN

Jez Cox

Duathlete and former elite cyclist



**I'm doing Ironman Austria in June and I'm thinking of upgrading my Scott CR1 Comp road bike in time for the race. At the moment I have mostly Shimano Tiagra components, and a set of Profile tri-bars attached to drop handlebars. The wheels are Alex Race 28 Aero Profile with Continental Race Pro tyres. I can afford around £500 in upgrades, although conceivably I could even get a different bike. What would your experts advise?**

Steven Dinan

**AUSTRIA HOSTS** one of the world's flattest Ironman bike courses, so it's crucial that you're both aerodynamic and comfortable. The lack of climbing means you will be seated and tucked into your riding position for long periods of time, so it would make sense to keep your current Scott bike and initially spend up to half the money on building a position which you are ready to ride in for many hours, with a minimum of unnecessary drag.

A full bike fit from a reputable fitter will help you get the most out of what is already a quality race machine. A qualified bike fitter will be able to take into account your riding style and physical limitations, as well as adjust the new equipment you will be fitting in

order to get the best from it. Ahead of this I would suggest upgrading your drop handlebars to a dedicated tri-bar and base bar, that will ensure you are able to get the most comfortable 'aero' position at the front end. Much of this is down to an almost infinite amount of adjustability. You should be able to get a set for under £250, and swapping them in will save quite a lot of weight as you won't have the drop handlebars – which would become obsolete once you are spending long periods in the aero position. You will also be able to swap your integrated brake and gear levers for much lighter ones, which attach to the end of your bars and are much easier to use without having to reach across to change gear, as you will have done previously.

Your current wheels and groupset are fit for purpose as long as they have been maintained well – and if you are careful in choosing good value bars, you might just have enough left to take advantage of a clever new product that has recently become more available. A number of UK dealers are now selling clip-on wheel covers that fit over the spokes of your rear wheel to make it work as a disc wheel.

The aerodynamic advantage this offers is considerable and you only have to have a slight cross-tailwind to feel its 'sail effect' when it catches the wind. Their use is allowed in Ironman races and, at around £100, they give a great advantage at a fraction of the cost of a dedicated disc wheel. They are also wonderfully versatile: if on the day you find that high winds would make their use unsafe, you can simply unclip and remove them without having to change wheels.