

ENDURANCE TRAINING FOR HALF IRONMAN

Most triathletes will complete the 1.9 km half-Ironman swim in less than one hour. This means that half-Ironman athletes are preparing to race a solid tempo effort. For those people finishing in under 40 minutes, race pace falls somewhere between a tempo and a threshold effort. As with the Ironman distance training, you need to practice the distance and time required to complete the swim portion of the race. The endurance sets should be between 2.5 and 3 km. For tempo efforts, progressively increase sets to 2.5 km. Recall that tempo efforts are faster than your aerobic pace and that the length of the main set does not include your warm-up and warm-down.

TIMING

Unlike your bike and run sessions, your swim sessions can remain long and intense close to your A, or main, race. For Ironman athletes, long swim workouts should continue to be done until about two weeks before your A race. Half-Ironman athletes should start reducing the length one to two weeks out from their A race. Why should you continue to push your swim sessions so close to the race? First, you don't sustain the same type of muscle damage in the water as you do from running or cycling. Your muscles undergo oxidative stress during intense aerobic work, but they are not subjected to the level of direct muscle trauma. Second, most triathletes only swim twice per week and have plenty of non-swim days for upper body recovery.

To increase your level of preparation you should make sure you work in all the other elements of the swim – starts, buoys, passing, drafting, waves, current (can be simulated with parachute or endless pool) and crowds. By practicing these items you will be better able to regain your focus, form and rhythm when it is disrupted in a race.

Ensuring that you have done race-appropriate endurance swim training is key to feeling prepared and it is critical to a successful swim. Making sure you train your mental strategy, technical open water elements, pacing and even your nutrition plan may put you ahead of your competition. **TR**

Ayesha Rollinson is a professional triathlete and swim coach from Toronto.