

The background of the entire cover is a photograph of a triathlete in silhouette, standing on a beach and looking out at the ocean. The sun is a large, bright orange-yellow sphere in the upper right corner, casting a warm glow over the scene. The water is dark with some whitecaps visible.

# TRIATHLON SECRETS

Triathlon Secrets of  
Olympic Medalists and  
Ironman Champions

***REVEALED!***

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# TRIATHLON SECRETS

The Training Secrets of  
Olympic Medalists and  
Ironman Champions – *Revealed!*

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## SOME EXCERPTS FROM TRIATHLON SECRETS

*"...data was becoming the new stretching...people preferred chat to training..."*

*"I was training myself not to listen to what I was feeling, neither physically nor emotionally."*

*"...I learned that despite the claims of 'custom training plans, zone training tells most people to train in a very generic way without regard to changing environmental factors and regardless of what their body might be telling them..."*

*"...even an expensive Maximum Heart Rate test will not give you more reliable information upon which to design more useful training zones. If you are fatigued entering the test, you will test lower than actual."*

*"...**The Method** uses just some basic equipment chosen specifically to enhance the payback on every training session for each athlete, and to reap maximum benefit for every drop of blood, sweat and tears shed in preparation for the next race."*

*"...**The Method** had been harnessed to the sport of triathlon with devastating effect: Multiple world championships over long and short course; Olympic medals; Ironman wins – athletes at the top of the sport were all familiar with its inherent principles."*

*"**The Method** encourages athletes to develop a broad feel for the workings of their own body. Like life, training by **The Method** is a qualitative experience!"*

*"...training with **The Method** meant learning to read the body's signals and knowing to trust one's own intuitive understanding of the body"*

*"Keeping things simple is the key to understanding **The Method**."*

*"When you train by **The Method**, you come to understand what the words FORM UNDER DURESS mean."*

*"...you can train to maximum efficiency (for your situation) while optimizing recovery."*

*"Knowing that your program is built upon highly successful principles builds confidence and allows you to approach your training with greater motivation and clarity of purpose."*

*"You don't waste time or energy readjusting to new, haphazard sessions and reconfiguring weekly schedules."*



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# PART I

# ERRORS IN TRAINING





## INTRODUCTION

Some years ago I made the switch from competing as a professional triathlete with a full-time job back to “the real world”, working full-time and switching from racing to coaching triathletes professionally. An eventual change of continents and careers led finally to my transition into the full-time coaching role I enjoy today as Head Coach of ironguides.

When I retired in late 2000, my decision to end racing came about because I was quite simply burned out. Although I’d just placed top 50 in the Hawaii Ironman Triathlon for the second time, I had been looking for more, having trained myself into the shape of my life that summer. I’d been training like a demon for 13 years and had enjoyed some modest success in that time, winning multiple professional National Championships in Canada, racing under four hours for the half Ironman distance and placing top ten in Ironmans around the world.

After my joyless race in Kona, however, I couldn’t understand how all that training had led to the massive fatigue, disappointment and illness I was now experiencing. And so at season’s end I hung up my gloves and unwittingly started a multi-year journey of search and discovery to understand where I’d gone wrong and what I could do to prevent this experience for the athletes I was now coaching.

During my quest to understand, I questioned everything about how I had been training. In particular, I examined why I had gradually but consistently gotten slower the more I trained despite being in my peak performance years. I challenged my beliefs and opinions and took a close look at the cherished assumptions I’d held to be true about triathlon training throughout my athletic career. I knew I had been putting in the same hours as Ironman winners and short course champions and I wanted to know where I’d gone wrong. Clearly there was a disconnect between reality and what I held to be true, so I started by asking myself some questions:

*Why was I slowing down each year at the half Ironman distance, from 3:56 to 4:04 over three seasons – despite more training?*

*Why would my beard stop growing when I trained harder (I was reduced to shaving every ten days or so during my peak training phases!)?*

*What happened to my libido during the hard training phases? And connected to that, where did my confidence go? I was national triathlon champion – shouldn’t I be diggin’ it in style?*

*Why did I burn out so completely one year that I could not do a thirty-minute jog without getting sick?*

*Why would I gradually lose muscle tone and put on fat at times when I was training hardest?*



*Why was I training more than ever but my Ironman times were not improving? I'd hired a professional coach and trained more, but it made no impact on my speed. Sure, I could do more Ironmans each year – but I stayed at my old familiar pace of nine-oh-something each season, every race. Why?*

*Where did my short course speed go during this time? I had completed a non-drafting, 1.5km/40km/10km triathlon in 1:49:50 and each succeeding year my short course time got slower and slower. I wasn't improving at the Ironman distance and I was slowing down at the short course distance: Why?*

*How come so many times after completing a long training phase feeling fantastic, fit and fast I'd enter into my taper only to arrive at race day feeling flat, sluggish and lacking zip?*

*Why did I have insomnia so often? Why was I constantly feeling on the verge of getting a cold? I used to never get sick – now I was sick two or three times a year. Why?*

I felt constantly stressed out, with little energy left for my day-to-day living. My relationships were falling apart. Where had gone the joy in sport? Triathlon is such a fantastic lifestyle sport and I felt like a zombie!

### **WHAT WAS GOING ON?!**

In the ensuing years I came to understand that I had been caught in a perfect storm: The Internet had just launched, the triathlon boom was starting and new technologies were allowing some very clever entrepreneurs to mass market thinly disguised “custom” training approaches that enabled them to “coach” the greatest number of athletes at the least cost of expended time and energy.

Certain fads including massive volume work caught the imagination of the masses and were adopted as conventional wisdom, much to the contrary of the performance evidence.

A coach I knew took a 2:12 marathoner from Kenya, slapped a heart rate monitor onto him and promptly turned him into a 2:18 marathoner. In Kenya that's going from “knocking on the door” to the door slammed shut and the end of the dream of your own family farm.

Another talented neophyte ran 2:40 for his first Ironman marathon and started his entry into slowing down immediately after. Years later he still hasn't come close to repeating the feat. A lot of ill planned volume work took the natural speed right out of him. Likewise, an athlete from my hometown had great early success with her epically haphazard approach – only to watch her results drift from that same “knocking on the door” place to Nowheresville as she kept hammering herself randomly and relentlessly with over-distance training. Over and over in the coming years I saw it: Talented, passionate athletes blowing away their best years on macho training bravado.

I too had slowly come to train according to what I saw more and more of on the Internet. In my case, epic volume and zone-based training slowly undermined my intuitive understanding and response to my own body's signals that I'd once used to portion out my training.

I figured that if I had read it on the Internet and that if it came backed by sports science – surely I was the problem, not the information I came across online? I mean – it was everywhere! No one seemed to be doing things any different – surely it had to be correct, what I was being told – what I was being sold?

Later I realized that during this time I had lost faith in my own ability to judge what I needed best. Unaware, I had accepted others' intelligent sounding training theories as gospel without questioning the evidence.

## THE METHOD

Eventually I came to understand that in fact there were some athletes who were doing things differently – very differently. They were winning the big races regularly, and although they trained incredibly hard, they were able to back up their training day to day, week to week, month to month, year to year – without breaking down as I had done.

When I explored further I discovered that at first glance their training secrets weren't so complicated, but that the very simplicity of their methods belied a highly sophisticated understanding of the human body. Integral to their method was a reliance on common sense, intuitive feedback and precise structuring of training instead of a reliance on the testing procedures and technological trappings of **sports science or the random** hammer blow, “bludgeon” **approach of massive volume training**.

It was ironic. Everywhere you looked, technology was defining sport: *What you ate, how you trained, how you behaved after training*, the degree to which you (didn't) remove yourself from the training mindset. Data was becoming the new stretching. Forums hosted debates on the merits of one molecular structure versus another. People preferred chat to training! In the midst of this sea of noise, I came to learn that **The Method** *was an amalgamation of training approaches and techniques that had been around for decades, it had nothing to do with improvements in technology and everything to do with the actual workings of the human body.*

I also learned that **The Method** had been harnessed to the sport of triathlon with devastating effect: Multiple world championships over long and short course; Olympic medals; Ironman wins – athletes at the top of the sport were all familiar with its inherent principles. Dozens of athletes had learned it and had passed on its secrets to others. And yet, only a select few in the sport seemed to know about it. It was no coincidence that those few were precisely the ones who were most highly and consistently successful where hundreds of their competitors were not.

Most striking, **The Method** was decidedly “old school” and forsook the most common notions and tools of “standard” triathlon training. No heart rate monitors, no lactate testing, no power meters – just some basic equipment chosen specifically to enhance the payback on every training session for each athlete, and to reap maximum benefit for every drop of blood, sweat and tears shed in preparation for the next race.

And yet, nowhere in the mainstream media was there any mention of this! Since there wasn't much in the way of gear required to train by **The Method** there certainly was no advertising



revenue to be had in promoting it, that's for sure. As well, **The Method's** old school approach meant that the army of sports scientists who hid behind the myriad folds and wrinkles of triathlon's highly complicated, complex workings weren't able to sink their teeth into it. There was nothing in it to justify their existence or livelihood because **The Method's** logic was so clear, so lucid and so beautifully cohesive once you came to understand it that a newly minted, textbook educated sports scientologist couldn't possibly come to comprehend it: It was too beautiful, too simple, too pure...and too devastatingly effective to argue against. In fact, **The Method's** very simplicity threatened to undermine the justification for many of the theories, services and training approaches being offered to triathletes everywhere.

Was **The Method** deliberately being suppressed? Here and there I certainly stumbled across pockets of disproportionate ridicule and dissent – there were some strong, outspoken voices who questioned the merits of a training approach that had developed seven out of ten world champions in one decade. “It's like throwing eggs against the wall”, said one – “eventually you get one that doesn't break and you got yourself a champion.”

Well, them's mighty soft walls I guess. Consider that in Kona in 2007, three of the top ten women at the Hawaii Ironman were disciples of **The Method**. Triathlon short course gold medallists and world champions were more examples of unbroken eggs.

**SIMPLICITY. SOPHISTICATION. SUSTAINABILITY. Add it all up and that's a lot of good eggs.**

## INTO THE TWILIGHT ZONE

I remember my first heart rate monitor. It was a shiny black affair with white trim, an elastic strap and three functions including upper and lower thresholds. How fantastic, I thought – now I no longer needed to pay attention to how I was feeling and could simply rely on a device to tell me if I was over- or under-doing it in my workouts. I could tune myself right out of the picture! Brilliant.

I'd bought it on my new coach's advice – it was to enable me to properly follow the new training plan I was being sent. When the plan arrived I even received a sheet to help me correlate how I was feeling to what the data should be telling me. "Hard" meant Zone Three, for example, and Easy was Zone One. From then on began the reeducation of **me – or rather, the de-education.**

You see, gradually an obsession with data took hold of me and began to displace the spontaneous joy I used to experience in training. I became more machine-like – more efficient, yes, but at the price of a deeper, intuitive understanding of and feeling for the inner workings of my body. I was forgetting to listen in on my body's own signals about how I was feeling and came instead to rely solely on what the heart rate monitor was telling me.

No longer would I go out and just train. Used to be, if I felt good at the start of training I'd slap it into the big chain ring and go knock off my favorite 80km loop in a couple of hours or less. Now my plan told me that no matter what, today was about Zone Two. If I felt great, it didn't matter – I was to stick to the numbers and let that little **beeper tell me to slow down.**

Likewise, if I headed out the door tired and felt really fatigued, the plan said "never mind, it's all about Zone Three today." So I'd give it my all and smash myself despite feeling pretty tuckered out at the start of the workout and worse as it went on. Naturally the next day I'd wake up feeling like a truck had backed over me. And sex with the girlfriend? Forget it! I was barely shaving let alone shagging!

This new, empirical approach derailed my qualitative experience of my sport –of my life! I was slowly teaching myself not to listen to what I was feeling, neither physically nor emotionally. Our emotions are one of our most powerful tool to help us intuitively understand the deep inner workings of the body, soul and mind – any coach worth his salt knows that irritability or depression in an athlete is one of the warning signs of physical breakdown and over-training. My new training approach taught me to ignore all this and set the pilot to override. I guess that's what you call drone training!

But I carried on. This was sports science after all! How could what I felt possibly hold up against what they knew? Well, as Simon and Garfunkel once sang: "When I think back on all the crap I learned in high school, it's a wonder I can think at all..."

## ALL ZONED OUT AND NOWHERE TO GO...

...but down in the rankings! Clearly heart rate monitors have been a boon to many. They've enabled people to more clearly structure training and efforts and permit coaches and trainers to better guide athletes' effort levels. Millions of heart patients have benefited from monitors to help them safely rehabilitate their hearts and newcomers to fitness and wellness have used the tools to great success to ease into a health and fitness lifestyle. However, at a certain point this great tool can become a great ball and chain if we forget to rely on what we already know.

Let's take a closer look at Heart Rate Training Zones and the implications therein. Below is a standard formula many coaches use today to derive Training Zones for their plans, based upon an arbitrary number that has been concluded to fairly represent the maximum heart rate for men and women everywhere.

- ❗ Maximum Heart Rate for a Man =  $220 - \text{Age}$
- ❗ Maximum Heart Rate for a Woman =  $225 - \text{Age}$

This is a reasonably accurate approach but it is based on an averaging of samples gathered across a population including non-athletes. The implication is that our maximum Heart Rate is purely a function of our age and has nothing to do with current circumstances.

Well, consider this: One study done on Tour de France cyclists showed that on average, their maximum Heart Rate dropped by over 10bpm over the course of the three weeks of the race. As a professional Ironman triathlete, the highest heart rate I ever saw in training, laboratory testing or racing during my triathlon career was 177 beats per minute (bpm) – at age 33! Several years after I retired, in a cycling hill climb with some friends I decided to slap on my buddy's heart rate monitor just for old time's sake – and saw a max reading of 181 bpm, this time at age 37. My maximum heart rate had gone up three beats in four years!

So much for theory. Point being: Fatigue can seriously compromise your perceived and your functional training zones and generic guidelines delivered by science are based on an averaging out of vast reams of data that do not take into account your context.

The fatigue you feel is REAL. The training zones are not real – they are arbitrary ranges that enable a coach, scientist or trainer to assign a training session to many individuals by dictating a “range” at which to train. It's a safe way of assigning a certain training session and having a reasonable certainty that an athlete is at least making or capping an effort – whether appropriately or not depends on the trainer's understanding and feel for the sport.

Precisely this is the bane of zone training: It promotes a focus on heart rate and aerobic conditioning to the exclusion of all other aspects that come into play in human motion. Strength, form, speed, power and various other systems come into play in a properly trained individual. In fact, I discovered later in my quest for the truth that my obsessive focus on aerobic training had caused me to exclude much from my training that I could otherwise have easily incorporated without sacrificing any gains in aerobic conditioning. Zone training encourages new athletes and

under-informed athletes alike to develop a reliance on data instead of an intuitive connection with their body.

Even an expensive Maximum Heart Rate test will not give you more reliable information upon which to design more useful training zones. If you are fatigued entering the test, you will test lower than actual. Consider the following generic formulae many trainers today use to derive training zones based on your maximum heart rate:

- ❗ **Zone 1** = 60-70% of Maximum Heart Rate
- ❗ **Zone 2** = 70-80%
- ❗ **Zone 3** = 80-90% (92 or 93% for “highly trained” athletes)
- ❗ **Zone 4** = Over 90% (or 92 or 93%)

There are also variations on the above that take into account your resting heart rate. But by and large, if you calculate your zones based on our Age formula above, you can see for yourself that if your maximum heart rate differs by even as much as 5bpm, the training zones you derive from the above calculations don’t differ by much more than a few beats either way.

But so what? Why does this point matter? Well, it matters because you are not training in a laboratory: You are training in the real world. All the variables are not controllable. Factors including sleep, nutrition, stress, hydration, altitude, caffeine intake and any number of environmental factors can greatly influence your heart’s response to exercise on any given day. A depressed maximum heart rate can be a sign of illness, severe stress or over-training, for example – yet your zone training won’t take this into account. On top of this, one or two beats difference either way don’t matter.

In other words, my experience taught me that despite the claims of “custom” training plans, zone training tells most people to train in a very generic way without regard to changing environmental factors and regardless of what their body might be telling them. If professional athletes such as Tour de France cyclists can drop their maximum heart rate by 10bpm in a matter of weeks, pre-set training zones are going to be pretty meaningless in context of the fatigue they are feeling from the race. In such a state, if you continue to train by zones instead of by what your body is telling you, you will seriously compromise your health as you override your body’s warning signals for rest.

As I came to learn, **The Method** meant learning to read the body’s signals and knowing to trust one’s own intuitive understanding of the body. This doesn’t mean heart rate monitors aren’t useful – what it means is that you are your own best heart rate monitor! If you listen closely, you can learn to tell what the body says it can deliver and what it needs.



## ONE LOUDER

Remember the movie “This is Spinal Tap?” In one famous scene, band leader Nigel Tufnel explains that because the volume knobs on the band’s amplifiers were numbered to eleven, the band could play louder as a result.

**Nigel Tufnel:** *The numbers all go to eleven. Look, right across the board, eleven, eleven, eleven and...*

**Marty DiBergi:** *Oh, I see. And most amps go up to ten?*

**Nigel Tufnel:** *Exactly.*

**Marty DiBergi:** *Does that mean it's louder? Is it any louder?*

**Nigel Tufnel:** *Well, it's one louder, isn't it? It's not ten. You see, most blokes, you know, will be playing at ten. You're on ten here, all the way up, all the way up, all the way up, you're on ten on your guitar. Where can you go from there? Where?*

**Marty DiBergi:** *I don't know.*

**Nigel Tufnel:** *Nowhere. Exactly. What we do is, if we need that extra push over the cliff, you know what we do?*

**Marty DiBergi:** *Put it up to eleven.*

**Nigel Tufnel:** *Eleven. Exactly. One louder.*

**Marty DiBergi:** *Why don't you just make ten louder and make ten be the top number and make that a little louder?*

**Nigel Tufnel:** *[pause] These go to eleven.*

- From the movie “This is Spinal Tap”.

“It’s one louder.” Doesn’t this sound like some triathletes you know? Doesn’t it sound like some training approaches you’ve seen? Granted – I knew as a professional Ironman triathlete that the higher up the food chain you go, the harder you must train. The body’s adaptive abilities mean that as a high performance athlete in one of the world’s most trying endurance sports you need to push some very extreme limits to eke out the last little bit of improvement from your body. However, the vast majority of athletes who try this approach are not prepared for it and do their triathlon careers irreparable harm as a result.

Spinal Tap’s drummers had a funny way of dying prematurely after joining the band...maybe a little bit like triathletes who like to crank it to eleven in their training. Why is this? Why do athletes who enter an over-distance regime initially see improvement, only to slow down more and more over ensuing seasons?

The human body is a precise, finely tuned miracle of feedback mechanisms and responses. Most of our body’s reactions to the stimuli we expose ourselves to are governed by hormonal systems. Some of these responses are anabolic (they build the body up) and some are catabolic (they break the body down). In a “normal” existence these systems are in harmony and we exist without much fluctuation in our body’s response to the environment.







As I had learned, when you become an endurance athlete you enter a realm where the activities you are engaging in do make significant changes to your body's functions. By and large, endurance training is a catabolic process. You are breaking your body down relentlessly, backing off when appropriate to let it rebuild stronger than before. Picture a marathon champion or professional cyclist: Their bodies reflect the reaction to the stimulus to which they submit themselves. Muscle mass has been shed, the body has been stripped down – a totally catabolic process. In contrast, picture a 100m sprinter or a track cyclist. Their bodies have been built up by the demands of their chosen endeavor and they have accumulated muscle mass in response to their power- and strength-oriented training.

In short, how you train creates a hormonal shift in your body. If you train properly, the negative effects of your training are compensated by specific sessions designed to counter the detrimental impact of your sessions. However, if you don't understand the workings of the body you can end up training in a way that you think makes you "louder" than the others but which has long-term negative consequences on your performance and well being. In the end, you kill off your drummers.

As I learned, a training regime built around consistent over-distance training – always turning the dial to 11 – causes a very distinct hormonal shift. The shift is immediate but its effects take time to manifest themselves. In a typical man or woman, the normal balance maintained by the body between the hormones testosterone and estrogen according to our sex can be radically affected by a poorly conceived training regime. However, the effects are disguised because the short-term aerobic benefits of all that volume are acquired faster than the longer-term negative consequences of all that endurance work, all that catabolic effort.

So what you see are athletes doing a bunch of high volume training and improving – for a while. Over time as they pound themselves over and over their performances plateau, they go stale and eventually their performances drop as the longer-term negative consequences of lost strength, speed and motor skills overshadow the short-term aerobic.

In men especially the catabolic effects of endurance training are much more pronounced. Higher muscle mass means the body has more repair work to do because there is more damage done to body tissue during a difficult training session. Ironically, in the testosterone-driven, macho approach of epically high volume training, it's the very elixir that most governs a man's physical well-being that is his undoing.

-  Testosterone is an anabolic hormone: It builds us up.
-  Endurance training is a catabolic process: It breaks us down.

The battle between these two effects on the human body means that a poor training program causes a male athlete to depress their testosterone levels as they seek to accomplish ever more in training. And it's not just endurance sessions but also other types of training sets that will have the same negative effect: A male body struggling to recover from the relentless, poorly thought out training being thrown at it.

I recall a cycling session in Tucson, Arizona one year. We were coming back to town from an ascent up Mount Lemmon and passed a 7-11 on the way back in. There in the parking lot was this hot looking cyclist, all curves and leanness – we all pulled in to have a slurpee and get a closer look at her hotness. Well – talk about disappointment. It turns out it was a Spinal Tap drummer...or let's just say it was a man who had trained himself into a woman. It was so bad he was almost growing breasts!

Whatever he'd been doing he'd been doing a lot of it, I learned to recognize in hindsight, and it had depressed his testosterone levels to a point where the estrogen balance in his body was so out of balance that he was taking on the sexual characteristics of the gentler sex. He had done a lot of training – but was never heard from in any race. Ever.

When I learned **The Method**, these sorts of things all started making sense to me. I understood that I too had been a drummer for Spinal Tap for a while! The tendency towards putting on a little chub when I felt over-trained, the loss of libido, the need to shave once only ever ten days – these were all due to poor training methods and their effect on my testosterone levels. By the time I was getting sick from training, I had whacked my body into total oblivion. It was frustrating to realize that I could have avoided so much of this disappointment and all the emotional distress I'd experienced during my peak training years as I battered myself relentlessly. Sexual frustration, insomnia, high levels of stress and plummeting self-confidence only meant I trained even harder, seeking to prove myself somewhere at least. Precisely the wrong thing to do, as I later learned.

Clearly athletes who harness themselves to the over-distance machine experience some relative success at first. If you take a couch potato and walk them around the block four times a day for two weeks, you are going to see some significant improvements in their health, well-being and fitness too. It's all a relative process! Even a highly fit athlete will improve from some over-distance training. The trick is not to go overboard, not to swallow it hook, line and sinker as gospel, and not to believe that this is the be-all, end-all of endurance sports training. As I learned, **The Method includes** long endurance sessions but compensates for their destructive, catabolic effects with precise guidelines and compensatory sessions at precisely timed periods elsewhere in the schedule.

As it turns out my self-destructive experiences were valuable lessons. Once I came to grasp the principles behind **The Method**, I was able to combine their implications with my own experience to construct better training plans for my athletes. Muscled guys had to train differently than the ladies; older athletes had to train differently than younger ones. Long rides and runs needed to be kept under a certain duration if I wanted to avoid the negative hormonal effects on my clients. It all made sense and they all went faster – without epic hammer blows to the system, without cranking it to eleven.

## “GOING MOLECULAR”

As with anything, if you want to improve as a triathlete you have to pay attention to the details.

You need to ensure yourself a sound training program, decent nutrition, a bit of a routine, a familiar and conducive training environment and facilities, well-maintained equipment and the opportunity to relax and recover from your training and racing.

Unfortunately in this day and age of information overload, the words “attention to detail” have morphed into a monster of obsessive focus for many athletes. With the growth of the Internet has come access to more and more information, much of it completely irrelevant. Athletes agonize over heart rate and wattage data, supplement details, course profiles, race altitudes and a plethora of largely immaterial information. Instead of providing a road map to simplicity, this sea of noise has created a false sense of urgent necessity among many, compromising emotional and mental flexibility and leading to a kind of paralysis by analysis.

If there is one thing you need to sustain top performances year over year as an endurance athlete, it’s a certain lightness of being. Without fail, all the athletes I met, spoke with and observed who use **The Method** shared this same fundamental trait: Training is training, racing is racing, and in between there is little talk or attention paid to anything to do with triathlon. Time away from the sport gives them opportunity to relax, to recharge and to recover for the next training session or race. Likewise, as a coach one knows that those who improve the most are the ones who are best able to focus completely on training while they are training, and at the same time most able to leave it behind when done training.

One of the most powerful aspects of **The Method** is the program’s ability to help athletes better apply their focus. Instead of daily obsession with heart rates or power outputs, **The Method** encourages athletes to tune into their body at the start of training, see what it has to give and adjust accordingly. A few simple practices and common sense are used to plan recovery, training and race nutrition. And an emphasis on training consistency replaces the temptation to cut corners on fitness and seek non-existent shortcuts elsewhere.

**Keeping things simple is the key to understanding **The Method**.**

# PART II

# THE METHOD



## THE FIVE SYSTEMS

To understand **The Method** you need to expand your understanding of the human body. As outlined previously, this approach to training acknowledges that the body is a much more complex organism than we generally give it credit for. Accordingly, while deceptively simple in practice **The Method** is highly refined and sophisticated in design. At the same time, **The Method** encourages athletes to follow a clear, simple training plan without worrying about the interplay of bodily systems at work. The plan automatically ensures that the Systems are in balance and training and recovery are optimal. That said, a **general understanding of the FIVE SYSTEMS at work in The Method will help you get a better feel for how it all works.**

### I - STRENGTH

Each component sport in triathlon requires a sport specific strength. Many training approaches recognize this and include weight training or sport specific strength work in their approach.

However, where **The Method** excels is in structuring the strength work in a way that does not negatively impact training progress in ensuing sessions. Strength-oriented sessions are structured so that the type of training done does not inappropriately overload systems. As well, the use of appropriate tools stimulate strength systems and enhance the effectiveness of certain training sessions by killing two birds with one stone, without compromising the overall aim of the training session.

### II - NEUROMUSCULAR

As already outlined, a strong focus on the acquisition of motor skills is a key element of **The Method**. This is where **The Method** most sets itself apart from other training approaches.

For example, a zone-based training session might suggest you head out for X minutes in Zone Y for your training session. In a **The Method** training session, you might instead see specific instructions on how to swim, run or cycle, for a given period of time at a given perceived level of effort. Or you might be given a simpler set of instructions but be told to perform the training session using specific tools or equipment that help you to swim, bike or run with a specific form.

**The benefit?** You end up acquiring aerobic conditioning while focusing on the acquisition of oft-neglected motor skills. Or conversely, you focus on aerobic conditioning while using specific tools that gently, relentlessly help you acquire motor skills by design.

Using **The Method**, an athlete grows more and more conscious over time about their technique and form. They come to see Muscle Memory as a graspable, real concept they can effect and control. Over time, **The Method** teaches an athlete that form alone doesn't matter: **Your ability to hold form during higher aerobic intensities is what counts.**

Ever watch a professional cyclist climbing a vertical mile-high col? Or a miler rounding the final bend into the finishing straight? In each case you'd be surprised to see the athlete's technique and form break down – it's no coincidence that their technique holds during the most excruciating levels of exertion.



When you train by **The Method**, you come to understand what the words **FORM UNDER DURESS** mean. The usefulness of a motion – of technique or form – is only as good as your ability to apply it under pressure. In athletics, pressure equates to intensity and fatigue. When you least feel you are able is when your form matters most.

As an aside, the deeper truth inherent in those words goes a long way to understanding the mental and emotional composure **The Method** athletes display at the starting line and throughout a race. Often unwittingly, sometimes not, the physical regime of training by **The Method** becomes an athlete's guiding philosophy. As a student of karate immerses himself more and more in the spirit of the art, the discipline of learning the movements, harnessing the energy and focusing the mind lapses into a kind of relaxed concentration.

**FORM UNDER DURESS: Remember those words.**

### III - SPEED

Like every other type of training, speed-oriented training sessions come with undesirable consequences. For this reason, as in other training approaches, **The Method** structures speed training to avoid negatively impacting neighboring training sessions. But what's different is that at the same time, **The Method** uses speed training to downplay the negative effects of other, non-speed oriented sessions.

By paying attention to the type of recovery needed after speed training, **The Method** enables athletes to train more frequently without compromising overall development or the need for recovery from speed training.

In **The Method**, the **Speed System is never neglected**, even in higher volume phases of training. And in particular, what distinguishes **The Method** is its understanding of how we need to draw on speed in the sport of triathlon. In triathlon, the only times you hit a sport fresh is at the start of the swim. Unlike the “pure” sports of cycling or running, we triathletes begin the cycling portion tired, and the run portion...even more tired! Unlike running or cycling specific training approaches, the training methods used in **The Method** teach us to develop speed when we are tired from a completely different sport, so that we can tap that ability during the conditions encountered in a triathlon.

### IV - LACTATE TOLERANCE

Lactate tolerance is perhaps the most misunderstood System at work in the human body. Largely this lies with the popular misconception that “anaerobic” training begins at the “lactate threshold” level of performance.

In reality, nothing is further from the truth. Anaerobic refers to exertion in the absence of oxygen: A 100m sprint on the track or a 50m all-out swim are truly anaerobic performances. In triathlon,

almost none of our training is anaerobic – it is all to varying degrees aerobic conditioning. All. No one in triathlon is capable of swimming an anaerobic 100m freestyle effort, for example.

**The Method** pays a lot of respect to lactate tolerance training – both in emphasis as well as impact on the body athlete. A **The Method training plan** is structured to maximize the ability to recover from these, the hardest of training sessions, without compromising continued training and improvement. **The Method** ensures that those most susceptible to training damage from lactate threshold training receive more recovery, while those who need less recovery (because they are least able to smash themselves this way) train harder more often.

## V - ENDURANCE

**The Method** uses a few simple principles to ensure that this favorite staple of the endurance athlete's regime does not overwhelm their ability to continue training and sustain maximum consistency. Endurance work as we have seen comes with a high price in hormonal response. By ensuring the right amount of focus on endurance work – at the right time, for the right duration, at the right intensity – **The Method** enables athletes to recover more quickly and completely for the remainder of their training.

As with training the other Systems, **The Method** is structured so that the negative impacts of endurance training are minimized. By marrying endurance training to efforts that stimulate compensatory effects, **The Method** ensures that a strong endurance training effort does not overwhelm the athlete.

## PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Perhaps the expression **5! best** conveys why in the right hands **The Method** is so devastatingly effective. In **The Method**, each System impacts every other System:  $5 \times 4 \times 3 \times 2 \times 1 = 120$  different combinations of System interactions. Now factor in duration, intensity, overall volume, frequency of training, frequency of each type of training, diet, mental and emotional disposition, stress levels, sleep quality, and various other factors and you begin to comprehend the sophistication, utter refinement, artistic beauty and above all, the incredible genius of **The Method**. **Many athletes have tried implementing the workouts behind the method willy nilly, only to find themselves in the same boat as before: Injured, burned out, or disinterested.**

***The key to understanding why some succeed and others don't is to understand the relationship between The Five Systems.***

The key comes in recalling the hormonal responses to training that we have already discussed.

Each type of training comes with a different hormonal response on your body, and each response occurs to different degrees depending on aspects such as recovery status, workout duration and intensity, diet, sleep, stress and many other factors. Further, the order in which you train – in other words, the order in which the hormonal responses take place – affects each of the other systems (and responses)! Hence the high priority placed on structure and order of workouts for **The Method** athletes.



Actually, let me rephrase that because the concept is crucial:

**IN THE METHOD, ORDER AND STRUCTURE OF TRAINING ARE PARAMOUNT.**

If you train by **The Method**, you are training hormonal responses to take place in a specific order, to a specific degree (depending on your coach's best judgment) in such a way that you can train to maximum efficiency (for your situation) while optimizing recovery.

The secret to understanding **The Method** is to understand that when structured correctly, while one System is training, another System is always resting! In this way a Method athlete is able to train more often, more consistently, with greater quality and with lower risk of injury (for their workload).

In **The Method**, what sets apart the elite athlete from the amateur is simply the degree of training: The format, structure and nature of the training sessions remain the same for all. The very last thing **The Method** is, is a "cram it all into the week" training approach – for any athlete.



## PRINCIPLES OF THE METHOD

**The Method** relies on certain fundamental principles to produce results. **These principles work because at their core is the understanding that you are in Control.** You can effect change – to what degree and in what sense is governed by your willingness to do so, your underlying disposition and circumstances and your ability to remain objective and listen for feedback from your own self.

Note that in **The Method**, only the degree to which you can effect change is governed by genetics – that you can change is never questioned. In **The Method**, your body is a red meat computer – you’re programmable! If you were you to rank genetics as a factor of influence, they would rank well below attitude, desire, circumstance and a host of environmental factors in determining the outcome of your efforts. And as the expression goes, “if you don’t like your circumstances, change them.”

Once you have submitted yourself to the notion that **you are in Control** and you have aligned your desires with your ambitions, **The Method** operates on the following principles:

### **Repetition, Structure and Order, and Intuitive Feedback.**

#### **TAKING CONTROL: WAX ON, WAX OFF**

**Miyagi:** *First, wash all car. Then wax. Wax on...*

**Daniel:** *Hey, why do I have to...?*

**Miyagi:** *Ah ah! Remember deal! No questions!*

**Daniel:** *Yeah, but...*

**Miyagi:** *Hai!*

*[makes circular gestures with each hand]*

**Miyagi:** *Wax on, right hand. Wax off, left hand. Wax on, wax off. Breathe in through nose, out the mouth. Wax on, wax off. Don't forget to breathe, very important.*

*[walks away, still making circular motions with hands]*

**Miyagi:** *Wax on, wax off. Wax on, wax off.*

-- from the movie The Karate Kid

Nowhere are the shortcomings of zone or volume training more apparent than in each approach’s total lack of emphasis on motor skill development. With its obsessive focus on aerobic conditioning, zone training leaves little room to focus on motor skills while “staying in the zone” during the same session. While over-distance training can teach a highly focused athlete to acquire decent motor skills, as a rule most athletes are too depleted to properly concentrate on retraining their motor patterns during an over-distance program.

In fact, train in a state of near depletion often enough and you teach yourself to acquire worse motor skills than when you first started, despite more training. Ever see those long, slow “Zone 1”

runs folks do leading up to Ironman? Not only do they risk injury when they extend their runs out beyond three hours, but they're also teaching themselves inefficient motor skills as their strength and ability to hold form diminishes late in the run. Do this often enough and you train your muscles to run sluggishly – it's all they know after all! By contrast, by using **The Method** top athletes are able to apply specific training tools in all three sports and this way ensure that motor skill acquisition is never left out of training.

As Mr. Miyogi tells the Karate Kid, “wax on, wax off.” The Kid is waxing a car, but by following Mr. Miyogi's instructions he also teaches himself skills that help turn him into a karate champion.

Athletes who train by **The Method** constantly incorporate motor pattern development into their training. Instead of obsessing over aerobic conditioning, a strong focus on motor skill acquisition means form training takes equal priority – and the car gets waxed (you gain aerobic fitness) anyway!

### YOU ARE A RED MEAT COMPUTER

Let's revisit the concept of hormonal responses and their interaction in The Five Systems and apply this to waxing Mr. Miyogi's car.

Q: What is the Kid doing all day?

A: He's programming a motion into his body.

### FULL STOP, PERIOD.

When you train by **The Method**, you aren't just conditioning your aerobic fitness, building your speed or improving your strength. You are programming a motion into your body. Quite literally, you are programming your red meat computer – programming specific motor skills into the machine. You program by doing. You program effectively by doing under duress.

Like life, the process is an iterative one. You don't start at Level 100 – you start at Level 1 and you take it one day at a time. You don't look too far backwards or forwards: **You look at what you are doing right now. That is all that matters** – by focusing on the present session, the present set, the present interval, the present stroke, pedal or stride, you maximize payback on your efforts. Do this long enough and results will simply...**happen**.

This sounds a bit impersonal at first. But step back and consider the implications: Genetics determine our body's tendencies and limitations at the extreme end of a spectrum, but what **The Method** teaches is that you can overcome this by controlling environmental factors and paying attention to your training details. You do this by tweaking the weighting of The Five Systems (and other factors) in your training.

**Result:** You gain control of programming your Red Meat Computer in the way best suited to your genetic predisposition! Muscled men train differently from skinny women who in turn train differently from older athletes. **Same principles, different emphases.**

So yes – you are a piece of red meat, a red meat computer with software (your thoughts, psychological and emotional makeup), hardware (your muscles, skeletal structure and to a broad extent your neural wiring, as well as the underlying mental and emotional foundations laid down



in childhood), and a kind of middleware by which your internal systems react to the stimuli from your external environment (your hormonal systems).

Using **The Method**, you can shift your beliefs and attitudes about training over time to affect your software programming – we call this gaining confidence from results. The more flexible you are, the less you let “the noise” interfere with what you are seeking to accomplish, the more open you are to change – the better your results will be. And the more motivated you will be to train, and the lighter your sense of being becomes. Joy meets sport. It really is that simple.

Using **The Method**, you can reprogram the hard wiring of your physical make-up. You train in a way that increases fitness and trains motor patterns concurrently. **The Method** doesn’t encourage you “go through the motions” because it actively teaches there is nothing to be gained by it – you’re better off resting, because you will only teach yourself bad habits otherwise: You’re programming inefficient movements. And because **The Method** takes a broad picture on the body based on the overall context of the individual, as you age and are less able to affect change in motor patterns learned over a lifetime, **The Method** shifts emphasis towards strength and recovery and somewhat de-emphasizes motor skills acquisition.

Using **The Method**, you can work with your body’s hormonal responses to training stimuli instead of against them, and you can minimize the negative impact on your hormonal systems from your training, at any age, regardless if you are man or woman.

## REPETITION

Perhaps nothing defines **The Method** more than its highly iterative, repetitive approach. Via Repetition, **The Method** contributes to many factors that help athletes optimize their training.

### MOTOR SKILL ACQUISITION

Acquiring motor skills takes many repetitions of a specific motion to become “natural”: Just like the Karate Kid needed to repeat many times the “wax on, wax off” motion to lay the groundwork for acquiring more specific karate skills, as a triathlete you need to repeat many times specific swim, cycle and run motions if you want to ingrain these motor patterns and teach yourself more efficient form. When your body automatically performs a certain motion rather than as a result of conscious effort, you will have become a triathlon black belt!

By repeating certain specific, pertinent training sessions, **The Method** enables you to better acquire new motor skills and improve existing, well-formed ones. Ever notice what happens to your swim technique if you don’t visit the pool regularly? Among other reasons, that quick loss of motor skills is precisely why **The Method** places a stronger emphasis on swimming than other training approaches. Particularly aging athletes need to train and especially swim consistently to maintain their hard-fought motor skills.

### CONCENTRATION SKILLS

By having you repeat certain specific training sets over many weeks, **The Method** trains you to better focus on what you are doing. Less distractions means you can concentrate on your training, automatically teach yourself mental skills that will help on race day. Rather than encouraging athletes to plod or shuffle through unfocused sessions, **The Method** encourages every athlete to focus their effort on form development at an appropriately adapted level of effort – aerobic conditioning happens anyway.

### INTUITIVE FEEDBACK SKILLS

Because **The Method**’s repetitive program removes uncertainty and random variables from your training, as an athlete you are better able to hone in on how you are performing a given training set compared to previous weeks. It sounded crazy at first, but to repeat the identical training set for a period of weeks meant that over time you come to better interpret the many signals your body sends out to tell you how it’s feeling.

Rather than wondering if you’re feeling tired because the coach has changed the training session, you can remove that variable from your list of considerations. In this way you come to recognize the little “tricks” the body plays that can keep you from training as consistently as you would like. For example, what feels like fatigue can simply be lactate accumulation that we need to flush out of our system with some easy training before tackling the meat of the scheduled workout. A **The Method** athlete learns to interpret these signals over time and adapt his training to them.

For example, once you’ve become accustomed to a certain treadmill running set and come to anticipate how it “should” feel on a good day, you can better respond to your performance on the

days you feel "off." Rather than worrying about what might be wrong, you learn over time that the body simply has "good days and bad days" and that sometimes you need to train through some of these less positive times.

Over time, athletes who train with **The Method** develop a keen ability to literally feel how they are doing on any given day. Remember – controlling the variables takes the guesswork out of training. Rather than relying on empirical data that conveys only one aspect of an athlete's training performance, **The Method** encourages athletes to develop a broad feel for the workings of their own body. Like life, training by **The Method** is a qualitative experience!

That's not to say that Method athletes do not use heart rate monitors or power meters to judge feedback. Rather, they place the information these tools provide them in context of a larger, more intuitive awareness of their training. Since most athletes don't approach the state of fitness where these nuances come into play, **The Method** tends to come across as a simplified version of perceived exertion: **Easy, moderate and very hard pretty much describes assigned effort levels.**

## ANTICIPATION

For age group athletes especially, improvement comes from focusing on each workout and applying a few basic interpretations of how you are feeling to potentially modify the training. Since **The Method** focuses on optimizing training and recovery efficiency, athletes can follow their routines and focus on just giving their best in the moment – knowing improvement follows from this commitment.

Having a structured plan already removes doubt and anxiety from your preparations by giving you a road map to your goals. Knowing that your program is built upon highly successful principles builds confidence and allows you to approach your training with greater motivation and clarity of purpose.

## EFFICIENCY

Especially for age group athletes, a well-conceived training program is structured so that your periodization as the training year progresses does not interfere with carefully constructed routines and habits. For example, knowing that you will always run on a Wednesday evening, you can prepare yourself for your sessions well in advance. Only the type of run training will change over time as you transition into a different training phase – but you always have certainty about which sport you will be training that day. You don't waste time or energy readjusting to new, haphazard sessions and reconfiguring weekly schedules.

## PERFORMANCE TRACKING

Coupled with the other principles, **The Method's** repetitive approach helps athletes quickly and accurately gauge improvements from one week to the next. With **The Method**, athletes avoid engaging in inappropriately long race-level exertions or continual lactate threshold or VO2max testing. Instead, they track improvement week after week using their training splits.



By looking forward to beating a previous best time in your next session, you focus concentration, increase motivation and bring your energies to bear on performing a training session to your best that day. What felt "hard" one month ago at a certain pace still feels "hard" – but at a faster pace, or for a longer sustained effort. This in turn builds confidence and turns the athlete's attention to improvement with each and every session.

As well, repetition enables true comparisons of efforts and effects of environmental changes. Knowing that the training prior to a comparison session are very similar from one week to the next, an athlete can better judge the impact of technique work, different nutrition or a new piece of equipment. For example, in one striking case an athlete coach dropped their 200m swim times from 4:05 to 3:28 in four weeks after incorporating a new piece of equipment into their training.

## **GAUGING FATIGUE**

Repetition also helps you learn to better gauge fatigue levels and how to respond to different types of fatigue in training. This in turn helps you better decide how to adapt your training, which in turn helps avoid inappropriate levels of exertion and increase training consistency. For example, over time you might come to differentiate the types of fatigue that stress, lack of sleep or poor nutrition might provoke and learn that the body might be capable of performing equally well on those days. This creates great confidence heading into a race because you know that you can push even if you feel less than ideal.

Perceiving the patterns and workings of the body is an iterative process. The more often you repeat a cycle, the more you will come to learn and understand the vague patterns at work and to better interpret the signals you receive. This frees you to better focus on each workout and to schedule your rest more appropriately, when needed.

## **BUILDING CONSISTENCY**

Using a few simple guidelines, Method athletes learn to modify a training session based on the signals their body is giving them at the start of a session. This way rather than abandoning the training session, the athlete makes a slight compromise and alters the work to be done. Rather than missing a session entirely, the modified session reduces strain on the body, permitting recovery and maintaining consistency.

Only a repetitive training process enables you to gauge the effectiveness of such a response. Knowing that you compromised a training session a certain way based on specific feedback from your body, and witnessing the effects of this several times across sports and sessions, you gain more confidence not only in your ability to accurately read your body but also in your ability to respond to its signals. In a nutshell, you increase training consistency without putting recovery needs on the line.

## ORDER AND STRUCTURE

As outlined previously, when training by **The Method** your training sessions are set up in a very specific order that enables one system to rest while you train another. At first glance this seems intuitive since any decent training plan delivers different types of training from one day to the next.

### ENHANCING RECOVERY

What differs in **The Method** is that training doesn't just alternate or rotate between one type of session and another (for example, by training lactate threshold one day and endurance the next), but rather uses aspects of each of the Five Systems to enhance recovery and mitigate the negative consequences of each type of training. For example, to break up viscosity and sluggishness from a long endurance set, a series of very short, very fast intervals in another sport help boost an anabolic response to counter the catabolic effects of the endurance session.

Conventional wisdom neglects to differentiate between different types of “hard training” and prefers to balk at doing something that feels “hard” in one way immediately after a training session that feels equally hard – but in a completely different way. Method training doesn't shy away from this! In fact, at first glance a Method training plan seems absurdly difficult, but once one grasps that each session always challenges a System that has been at rest, one begins to understand that what the very specific structure and order of Method training permits higher quality training and better recovery across training sessions. A properly trained Method coach understands that the next session will not interfere with his athlete's need for recovery from today's session, and knows how to encourage his athlete to train where previously that athlete might have been told to rest instead.

Again, the point is to increase training consistency and avoid gaping holes in one's training routine. Method training prefers the constant chip chip chip of a chisel to the massive blows of a sledgehammer approach, and the training enables this by constant stimulation of rested Systems without overwhelming the athlete.

### THE RIGHT MIX

**The Method** embraces the full complexity of the human body and acknowledges that we need to implement different kinds of training sessions to maximize improvement and train all aspects of fitness in the most desirable way for your goal event. Depending on what you are training for, some sessions are more useful than others but carry with them a high cost of recovery, while others are equally pertinent but compromise benefits achieved elsewhere. Striking the right balance between all training effects and recovery requirements is what a well-constructed Method training plan is all about!

### TRAINING ORDER

In a Method plan, all sessions are set up so that each complements the other: By following the order of training as indicated in your plan, you enhance the efficacy of the previous and following training sessions because you optimize recovery and mitigate less desired effects. Endurance





training means training slower than race pace, for example – but doing so means training sub-optimal motor patterns and strength. By structuring your training the right way, your Method plan minimizes the drawbacks and enhances the positive factors of certain necessary components of your training.

Your training sessions are set up in the specific order outlined on each training plan. It's only natural that from time to time you need to swap sessions or to swap training days. In this case, it's alright to "mix and match" once in awhile. The point to remember is that over the long-term, adhering to the schedule maximizes the payback on your training time because the plan optimizes your ability to train and to recover from training.

If you mix and match once in awhile, you don't risk interfering with that process at all. Remaining flexible in this way helps more by relieving potentially stressful situations than it hinders you.

Do keep in mind that if you randomly mix training sessions or continuously change the order of sports in your training schedule, you can never come to reliably understand what your body is telling you about your state of recovery. Because you are changing variables in your training and are less able to put how you are feeling in context, you can't reliably pinpoint if your body's signals are due to the change in training or due instead to some other outside effect such as stress, illness, lack of sleep and so on.

## **GUIDELINES FOR NEW ATHLETES**

Trying to adhere to these guidelines can seem a bit daunting at first, but all you need to keep in mind when you need to modify your training schedule is that the sessions you should pay most attention to depend on your abilities and goals. If you're a weaker swimmer, it would be prudent to ensure you maintain a degree of consistency in your swimming. Likewise, if you're training for a long distance triathlon you should try to emphasize getting in your weekly long bike with a run afterwards.

If you are consistently short of time but able to fit in some of each session most days, take heart! You are training consistently. It's far more effective to train a little bit and maintain training frequency than it is to train large volumes once in awhile. Try to avoid too many days off in a row - even a short, 20min jog can help you maintain mobility, flexibility, aerobic fitness and muscle memory until you can train more later.



## CONSISTENCY AND LISTENING

Water beats stone. That's why **The Method** prefers the steady drip drip drip of Chinese water torture to the hammer blows of inappropriate intensity or volume to which many athletes subject themselves. The goal of **The Method** is to facilitate long-term consistency in your training.

For that reason, Method athletes are given a few simple guidelines to “test drive” their bodies before deciding if they ought to skip a training session on any given day.

### WHEN IN DOUBT

**...head out and try it out!**

That does NOT mean that you train when you're sick. Instead, what **The Method** encourages is that on those days where you are in doubt about whether you should train, simply try out your body and see what it tells you. Start the session with a very, very easy effort before deciding if you should cancel or continue.

- ❶ If you feel better after 20-30 minutes, continue the session as planned. You can always back off and take it easy if you find you are deteriorating later in the set.
- ❷ If you feel the same, neither much better nor worse, modify the session to place less strain on your body. For example, if you're to do a long endurance session, cut the duration and see how you feel later in the session before you decide if you will carry on. If you're to do a lactate tolerance session, greatly moderate both the duration and the intensity of the efforts and give yourself a lot more rest between each effort. This way you still engage your high end aerobic system and fast twitch muscle fibers a little bit, helping to maintain your accumulated fitness gains until you feel strong again.
- ❸ If you feel worse after test-driving your body for a very easy 20-30 minutes, pack in the session and head home. Your body's telling you that it's not prepared to train today and you might be fighting an impending illness or simply need to recover. Heed the warning and take the day OFF. "A stitch in time saves nine" – if you are genuinely ill or fighting illness, taking a few days off training early in the illness will prevent prolonging it interminably later in the illness.

**You can use these simple guidelines to judge the most appropriate response on a sluggish or “off” day.** Often you'll find that you will have a great training session on a day you might otherwise have written off.

**And on days you feel great?! Go for it!** Just remember, the goal is not to deliver hammer blows to the body, but to chip chip chip, drip drip drip and generate a long-term, consistent training stimulus on the body.

### ILLNESS



Try as we might, there is simply no way to avoid getting sick once in awhile. At these times **The Method** stipulates that you take time off and recover. Remember: With **The Method** everything is relative. When you are sick the body is weakened and it needs to recover from training – the goal is not to deliver hammer blows to your body. The goal is to achieve maximum, effective consistency.

## REST

That said, **The Method** does not set in stone when you are to take rest from training. Unfortunately this heretical notion has led to more misinterpretation of **The Method** than any other of its principles.

Life has a funny way of throwing curve balls at us, so that work, family and community commitments often oblige us to miss out on training. Rather than worrying about missed training when this happens, you can take comfort from the fact that you have been training consistently and diligently until then. Your days off due to commitments elsewhere become your rest days from training, and are automatically suited to your life schedule since they come when you truly need the time elsewhere and not when a schedule hammers them out.

You can also look at it this way: No schedule can accurately predict what you will be doing each day for months down the road. Quite simply, what **The Method** tells an athlete is rest when you need it.

Many amateur athletes are able to spend the better part of their day physically recovering from their training at a desk or otherwise in their daily work. **The Method** accepts that most amateur athletes do not have the same luxury of a daily routine dedicated to sport alone.

For this reason, **The Method** distinguishes between “mental” rest and physical rest. For example, a stressful work travel day during which you can’t train may cause you much mental fatigue while your physical training Systems have been resting! Consequently the stressful travel day counts as a rest day, even though you might be tired from it.

However, keep in mind that everything is relative in Method training! The hormonal context in which **The Method** places you determines how you ought to train subsequently. If the stressful travel day comes on top of much other stress in your life, the high-stress travel day can create a significant catabolic experience for your body. In this situation the Method training approach would advise you to avoid endurance work or excessive lactate tolerance training immediately following or during this or other high-stress experiences in your life.

## CIRCUMSTANCE MATTERS!

While this manual has set out to describe the broad concept and general principles of **The Method**, it shouldn’t be construed as a final word on the approach.

**If there are three words to define The Method, they are: What works, works!**

**The Method** is constantly evolving – its application to one athlete might mean completely different workouts than its application to another.

A certified Method coach understands this and uses the tools at his disposal to get the most out of his athlete. **The Method** acknowledges that each person's context, environment and circumstances are different. Rather than laying out hard and fast rules, **The Method** seeks to apply universal truths and the realities of the workings of the human body to each athlete's improvement.

For this reason **The Method** places a high emphasis on each athlete's objective understanding of his or her own personal circumstances. **The Method** acknowledges that an athlete's ability to approach their full athletic potential cannot be separate from their circumstances, whether this is by choice or by luck.

For this reason **The Method** places little value on absolutes. Keeping in mind that good fortune favors the prepared, when you train by **The Method**, you learn that:

### **SUCCESS IS RELATIVE!**

In **The Method**, the hurdles you overcome are the standard by which you measure your success.

## TRAINING INTENSITY LEVELS

As you have learned already, training by **The Method** means your training intensities are structured by how they feel on any given day. Each Method coach understands how to ease his athletes into a training plan and how to ensure they don't train too hard. Making use of appropriate tools such as heart rate monitors and power meters can be an effective way of confirming this and building both the athlete's and the coach's understanding of each athlete's fitness and recovery needs.

The human body is a very complex organism and is constantly sending signals about what it is and is not capable of on a given day. Too often, however, our minds interfere with the process of tuning in and listening to those signals. While the tools developed by the sports industry to help us quantify our training are useful, they should never be employed at the cost of losing touch with the deeper intuition of understanding what our body is telling us. The best heart rate monitor or power meter you will ever find is you!

**The Method** is based on decades of experience with all calibers of athletes, with at the highest level of the sport. **The Method** defines training intensities by how you feel, making use of the tools available to quantify exertion levels if needed. Most times, however, athletes quickly come to understand their bodies and signals and this way avoid falling into the trap of a one-dimensional approach to their training.

### EASY

**Easy training** means a comfortable, conversational pace.

- ❶ **In the swim**, swim without strain, without tension and without regard for speed or pace. Simple "plunk...plunk...plunk" relaxed strokes.
- ❷ **On the bike**, keep it flat, keep your resistance low and your cadence moderate, avoiding grinding a low gear or over-spinning a high gear.
- ❸ **On the run**, a gentle jog, keeping stride rate up without reverting to a sluggish step. In general, a sustainable, "all day" pace.

### MODERATE

A **Moderate pace** means that you are starting to push a little bit. This is a pace that starts to harness some strength in your stroke, your pedal stroke or your stride, but it doesn't feel hard. "Light and snappy" comes to mind, or "an easy lope" when running. The pace is sustainable for long efforts.

- ❹ **In the swim**, you swim without pushing your aerobic system to strain. Swim at a pace that is sustainable for what is to you a long effort (for a proficient swimmer this might be an hour, for a neophyte five minutes) and with attention towards pace, without racing it. Your breathing should be light enough that you easily recover for another effort within 10 seconds.



- i On the bike**, light pedaling at a pace you can sustain for many hours. Muscle tension is moderate and cadence is comfortable - if in a big gear, you are lightly creating higher muscle tension without fighting the gear. In an easy gear, you are pushing some muscle tension at a cadence high enough to stimulate your breathing lightly.
- i On the run**, you are "feeling your oats" and stepping out of warm-up pace. You could comfortably run this for several hours.

## COMFORTABLY UNCOMFORTABLE

Comfortably Uncomfortable means what it says. The effort does not feel like something you could sustain all day, and yet right here and now you can keep going at it without seeing the end of the effort. At the same time, it's not exactly pain free. You can sustain this pace for the foreseeable time, but your breathing is somewhat labored and conversation is definitely curtailed. You need to focus on the effort and on your form to maximize your pace. You are not pushing a pace where you need to notch it down – yet – nor do you feel like you would want to push it much faster, either. It doesn't quite hurt, but you can handle it because it's going to end. On the bike, a proficient triathlete is feeling like they could ride an Ironman at this pace. A neophyte is feeling like they could ride a half Ironman at this pace. Cadence is such that against current resistance, muscle tension is quite high but there is room to accelerate or push a harder gear. On the run, you can handle a half marathon at this pace. Not used in swim terminology.

## HARD or FAST

This is definitely uncomfortable! Depending on the context, you're **The Method Coach** will tell you to train at this highest effort level. Generally you never push this hard except for very short, specific efforts, occasional longer efforts always shorter than race distance or more sustained efforts late in a session when you are too tired to risk exceeding appropriate levels of exertion.

You are looking for sub-maximal aerobic effort (too short, too long or too tired to deliver this) but very hard breathing, and near-to-maximal muscular effort. And yet, there is a little left in the tank.

- i In the swim**, this might mean very short, very snappy efforts with lots of rest with good form. But pushed to the limit of effort!
- i On the bike**, you are giving it all you have got under the circumstances: Generally, you'll see this description as "HARD" at the end of a long ride. Your muscles are tired, now is the prime opportunity for truly training them!
- i In the run**, this pace really hurts but is not all out. There is enough to complete all efforts in the session without "blowing up."

## ALL OUT

This is a "give it what you got" effort for the indicated duration. Maximal aerobic and muscular effort – override the circuitry that is yelling at you to stop. Nothing left to give.

- i In the swim**, ALL OUT means swim as fast as you can for the indicated duration. You pay less attention to form or technique.



- ❗ **On the bike**, you ride the effort as fast as you can for the duration. This pace hurts -- intentionally. Your legs are at maximum tension, pushing the hardest gear possible for the duration.
- ❗ **On the run**, you are at maximum effort and you do not want to perform this effort again!

## THE THREE S's

With its unique, highly contextual approach to triathlon training, **The Method** provides every athlete with a proven system for making the most out of their training time.

### SIMPLICITY

Each training plan provides simple, proven and effective sessions. All you need to do is focus on the training session in front of you –results are a natural consequence. **The Method's** simple training sessions are easy to follow as they are effective.

### SOPHISTICATION

As you've seen, **The Method** embraces the full complexity of the human body and provides simple guidelines to interpret the signals it's sending. As well, **The Method** provides training sessions to specifically train systems most other training approaches neglect, meaning you improve quickly and to a higher degree.

### SUSTAINABILITY

By harnessing your intuitive understanding of the body to a repetitive training schedule, you learn to read your body's signals and to better apply these to your training and recovery. You'll also learn to "give what you got" each day and be happy that you trained hard, regardless of what your body was able to deliver. In terms of training, you accomplished the mission no matter what the power meter, lactate level or heart rate monitor says.

**Daniel:** Hey, what kind of belt do you have?

**Miyagi:** Canvas. JC Penney, 3.98; You like?

**Daniel:** [laughs] No, I meant...

**Miyagi:** In Okinawa, belt mean no need rope to hold up pants.

**Miyagi:** [laughs; then, seriously] **Daniel-san,**

**Miyagi:** [he taps his head] Karate here.

**Miyagi:** [he taps his heart] Karate here.

**Miyagi:** [points to his belt] Karate never here. Understand?

-- from the movie The Karate Kid

**BRICK BY BRICK**

**YOUR BEST IS OUR BUSINESS**







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