

Cool Weather Sprint Triathlon Clothing by Coach Daren

Long course races, like half and full Iron events, are all about finishing and being as comfortable as possible along the way. Athletes need to minimize distractions like a shoe rubbing on a sockless foot or bare hands getting cold on the bike. We'll take time to wear socks for the run, and to even put on fresh bike shorts before embarking on the half-day-long bike leg of an Ironman. But for sprint races like this weekend's NCTS Azalea Festival or the MAP race in a few weeks – time is of the essence, and comfort is not necessarily our focus.

Sprint races are all about speed. We can be a bit chilly, or slightly uncomfortable, for a short time in a sprint race if it saves us valuable time. I recommend to my athletes that they dress pretty much the same for cool weather (above 40 degrees when you come out of the water) sprint triathlons as they would for hot weather races. Tri shorts, tri top or sports bra, no socks, bike shoes, run shoes, and a number belt are my recommendations. Sunglasses are mandatory for eye protection on the bike, and a run hat is optional. Leave the fleece running hat, bike vest, long gloves, and tights at home. Personally, I put my toe covers on my bike shoes in October, and they stay there until April. Toe covers are good for sprint races, and do not add any time to transitions provided that you remember to have the covers on the shoes well before the race.

Making the change from the fleece and long sleeves to warm weather gear for a cooler race is tough to do. Keep in mind that your core temperature and skin temperature, upon exiting a pool swim, is likely fairly warm. You have just spent 30 minutes on deck and in the water in an 80+ degree environment. Your heart rate is up and warm blood is being circulated in your body, and despite what you may think, the first part of the bike ride will not be terribly cold.

The sprint bike is all about hard work, and your body will continue to generate a good amount of heat. Granted, it may be cool and windy, but in all seriousness, most athletes don't seem to mind the temps when wearing warm weather clothing. And, on the run course without the wind from the bike's speed, most all sprint athletes report getting very warm even in cool temperatures when wearing minimal clothing.

So, this weekend at Azalea, and in a few weeks at MAP, maybe rethink your clothing choices, and go for the warm weather racing gear. Sure, you could end up being cold...but if you are like most all athletes I've spoken with over the years you will be glad you left the gloves, fleece, and tights at home.

If you have any questions or comments, let me know.

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Triathlon