

Race Rehearsal Week (IM and Half)

By Rich Strauss

If you are training for a full or half Ironman, I recommend that you do a full dress rehearsal at some point in your training, no later than 6 weeks out from your targeted race.

Purpose: To rehearse all aspects of your race plan, so that you can identify weaknesses and fix them before race day.

Recommended Distances:

- **Half IM:** 56/7 mile or 3hr/1hr brick, whichever is shorter. Try not to go over 4 hours.
- **Ironman:** 100/7 mile or 5hr/1hr brick, whichever is shorter. Try not to go over 6 hours.
- **Swim:** If you have the time, you may also want to consider doing a swim before you start the brick, about 1000m/yds.

Rehearsal Points:

1. Pre-race nutrition, to include carbo loading, dinner the night before and breakfast the day of the race.
2. Race pace, as determined by a target heart rate range.
3. Race day nutrition plan at this target heart rate.
4. Equipment issues: what to wear, how to carry food on the bike, etc.
5. Your mental game.

Pre-Race Nutrition

These ideas are all from [Race Day Nutrition](#).

Monday: If you are a big coffee drinker, take a Vivarin tab in the morning. If it does not upset your stomach, congratulations, that is the last caffeine you will have for the rest of the week. If you want to leverage the benefits of caffeine, you will need to make yourself more sensitive to it by quitting cold turkey for a few days. Expect your head to hurt, badly, for a few days.

Tuesday: Begin loading with sodium phosphate, [PhosFuel](#). Follow the dosage instructions on the bottle. You will do this through Friday. Sodium phosphate is an acid buffer and has been shown to reduce the effects of lactic acid. However, your body builds up a tolerance to it, so you only want to try it once to make sure it agrees with you, and then put it away until race week.

Wednesday: Begin carbo loading to ensure full glycogen stores. Lots of complex carbs in the form of breads, fruits, and vegetables. Also begin hydrating with a sports drink. This will help you carbo load and sodium load.

Thursday: Same as Wednesday

Friday: Same as Wednesday and Thursday

Friday night: Have a good dinner with lots of complex carbs. Go to bed a little early.

Saturday morning: Have a very large breakfast, 800+ calories, at least 2 hours before your workout. You may want to consider drinking a meal replacement shake, or even waking up at 2 am, eating something, and then going back to bed. You lose about 800 calories in your sleep, so you want to replace these and start your workout with a full tank of gas.

1 hour before workout: take 200-400 mg of Vivarin. Caffeine needs an hour to start doing its thing. Continue to hydrate with a sports drink. Weigh yourself before you start the workout, so you can determine how much water you gained/lost and if you need to make any changes to your hydration schedule.

Race Pace

Perform the workout at your target heart rate. Try to make this as realistic as possible:

1. Minimal stopping.
2. Try to not go above your target heart rate.
3. Set your watch to beep every 10 min, to remind you to eat and or drink.
4. "Light feet:" high cadence, very little force on the pedals.
5. Every 30 minutes, stand in the pedals and stretch.
6. If this is a rehearsal for a full IM, seek out opportunities to save energy: coasting down hill when speed gets over X mph, etc.
7. If you are doing this as part of a group, ride your plan and don't draft.

Race Day Nutrition

You want to rehearse your nutrition plan under conditions as close to race day as possible. **Eat and drink what you plan to eat on race day, at the heart rate you plan to race at.** Before you do this workout, you should have dialed in your plan on long training rides and runs. This session is to simply confirm your plan and tweak it if needed. Some general guidance:

1. 1.5-2 bottles of fluid per hour.
2. 300-400+ calories per hour, regardless of source.
3. If you eat something calorie dense (bar, gel, etc), drink 6-8 ounces of WATER with it, not sportsdrink.
4. Considering taking another 200mg of Vivarin at about 3 hours on the bike.

Equipment

"Train how you fight." Wear what you plan to wear on race day, right down to your lucky socks. In addition, now is the time to rehearse things like Bento Boxes, aero bottles, gel flask holders, etc.

Remember, KISS: Keep It Simple, Stupid. Yes, because there are no aid stations you will have to carry more stuff than usual. But use your head to recreate race conditions as closely as possible.

Consider doing two loops on the bike, so you only have to carry half your stuff.

Mental Game

Prepare your head for the big day by putting it there.

1. Divide the workout into smaller sections and have a plan and goal for each.
2. Put positive keywords in your head that remind you to do something: "Head, face, hands, relax," for example.
3. About 30 minutes before the end of the ride, start to prepare your head for the run. Again, think positive thoughts.
4. Something is bound to go wrong or not quite to plan, that's ok, regroup and move forward.
5. Remember the [OODA Loop](#): Observe, Orient, Decide, Act. Observe the situation, Orient yourself toward possible courses of action, make a Decision, and Act.
6. Before you start out on your rehearsal take a minute to relax, say to yourself "I am as prepared as I can be for this day."
7. Read the [Athlete's Litany](#) daily.