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Transition Training

Article by Pete James

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Training for transitions can be just as important as training for any individual race discipline. Here you can gain and lose significant amounts of time, with no physical effort. Training for transitions as a group is best, but training individually is extremely useful for getting your own head around the basic tasks you need to perform and then speeding them up.

Individual training

Begin by establishing a general procedure that your team agrees with, and then follow it correctly. Don't rush – speed will come through becoming better at what you need to do, and not getting distracted. Every race is different so the key is to break the transition down into distinct chunks:

- Eating
- Changing clothes and shoes, skates etc
- Re-packing sack (removing unwanted gear and rubbish and adding new gear, food and drink)
- Assembling or packing your bike / preparing your boat etc
- Mapping – picking up new maps or even marking up new CPs, etc
- Checking that everyone is leaving with the correct mandatory kit

Group training

When training for transitions, your general aim is to get 'in and out' as quickly as possible, whilst simulating race conditions as far as possible.

To practise, we tend to plan out a hypothetical 'race', pack gear into sections in our gear boxes and then lay the boxes out with space between each person's, as we would in a race. We then run, bike or (pretend to) kayak around the block, changing clothes and picking up the correct mandatory kit based on fictitious lists in each transition. You may feel a little conspicuous running down the street dressed in a wet suit and carrying a canoe paddle, but that's all part of the fun.



Team 9 Feet.com (now Team Saab Salomon and Nike ACG Endure) transition training before the Adrenalin Rush, 2001

In real transitions, you may decide to vary the amount of time you will spend there depending on the tasks to be performed, and factors like how long you will be racing before the next transition point. For a sprint race you should be thinking in seconds.

There are often group tasks that need to be performed in transition, such as checking in and out, marking up or changing maps, picking up new team mandatory equipment or loading boats and filling water bladders. By practising transition training as a group, you get an idea of who can organise their own kit most quickly, and then can allocate team tasks accordingly.

Make sure that you double check the kit you are all carrying before leaving. Forgetting items of mandatory equipment can lose a race, or even end it. It is important to establish a procedure for checking, either using lists in individuals' gear boxes, having the support crew or one of the race read out the items required, or some combination of these.

Race stages vary widely in duration, and the kinds of food you can eat and the suitability of various drink container options vary accordingly. The key is to organise everything in advance, depending on race format. Pre-fill spare bladders and bottles whenever possible. Organise your race food into bags according to the estimated length of the stages or into 1 hour 'units'. Keep transition food and clothing (e.g. a warm hat, jacket and sandals) near the top of your box along with a spoon, can opener and toothbrush, so that everything you need immediately is to hand.



Pete James in Transition during the Adrenalin Rush 2001

Remember: The basic rule of KISS, as always, applies. And, as always, practice makes perfect, so don't leave this important aspect of racing to chance. You will be surprised what difference a little forward planning will make.

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