

The Transition Period

As I prepare for my final two races of the season, I have occasionally found myself looking forward to some time off from structured training, and during long rides and runs I've already begun to plan my transition period. And right now, I am really looking forward to it. The anticipation I'm feeling for this crucial phase of my training tells me one important thing - I need the break.

The majority of my season has focused on long distance events, and I have logged lots of hours in the weight room and pool, on the bike, and in my running shoes. Physically and mentally I need to take a break from my highly structured training schedule. For the same reason that I build rest days into a week of training and reduced-volume/rest weeks into my four-week training cycle, my body and mind also need to take a longer rest phase (four to five weeks) within my yearly cycle, to properly recover from the accumulated wear-and-tear of in-season training and racing.

I consider this transition period my "off-season." Just as other athletes take a break from their regimen, triathletes, duathletes, runners, and cyclists need some down time, too. This break will give your body a chance to rest and repair following the racing season. By changing gears (slowing down) and trying different activities, you can still maintain a level of fitness without putting the stress of structured training on your body. But don't ignore taking total rest days (no physical activity), as well. A day or two in a vegetative state (think of how nice a weekend without a long run or ride will be!) is a great way to say, "I care" to your body. Just don't prolong these periods of inertia for the entire transition phase.

So, here's my transition period to-do list (can't quite get away from keeping lists), which I share with you in hopes that it might encourage (even entice) you to take that critical and, I'm sure, well-deserved break.

- Lose the log and relax!
- Throw in a day or two or three of complete rest.
- Stay off the road bike and hit the trails on the mountain bike.
- Stay off the roads and hit the running trails.
- Lock up the heart rate monitor and go by feel.
- Try something different like yoga or Pilates.
- Take long walks with the family and dogs.
- Take the kayaks for an easy paddle.
- Stay away from the master's swim group and don't count the yardage.
- Sleep in.
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Now is the time to start thinking about your transition period, so that when it is time to begin structured training for next season you will find yourself rested, relaxed, and eager to kick off your training plan.

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