



You Can Do It!
The Iron Girl Sprint Triathlon
A 12-Week Training Program for Beginners
By Coach Troy Jacobson

About Coach Troy Jacobson

Since 1992, Coach Troy Jacobson has been a leader in the field of sports performance training and coaching, developing a program that focuses on the fundamentals. This site is designed to provide people of all backgrounds, ages and ability levels important information that will help them achieve their athletic goals as well as their personal goals.

The Official Coach of Iron Girl, Troy Jacobson is the creator of the Iron Girl Multisport DVD Series. For more training articles, podcasts, videos and coaching advice, visit Troy at www.CoachTroy.com

Get ready for the Iron Girl sprint triathlon, it's time to start training! This 12-week training program is designed for beginners and promises to get you to the starting line in shape to finish comfortably and safely at your own pace.

Before getting started, make sure that you've received the OK from your personal physician and have some exercise experience. Also, if you have the opportunity, find a local friend, mentor, tri club or coach who can do some of your training with you. Having others involved in your training program, as part of your support network is a great way to add fun to the entire Iron Girl training experience!

ABOUT THIS PROGRAM

This 12-Week program is designed for someone new to the disciplines of swimming, cycling and running. The focus of the program is to make you comfortable with each sport to the point that completing the sprint distance triathlon is realistic and safe. We're not trying to win the race this time around as we'll save that goal for the NEXT time! However, I do want you to get a sense of 'what it takes' and to develop a routine of training, nutrition and other healthy lifestyle habits that make triathlon such a powerful and popular sport.

WHAT DO YOU NEED TO GET STARTED?

All you need is the desire and determination to train in order to get to that finish line! Of course a swimsuit, bike and running shoes will help too!

Your basic equipment checklist:

1. Comfortable swim suit and goggles
2. Bike of any model that is inspected by your local bike shop for safety.



3. Bike helmet and comfortable cycling attire.
4. Running shoes and a hat or visor.

On race day, many athletes will wear a comfortable 'tri suit' which is designed to be used in each sport (swim, bike then run) without the need to change clothes in transition. This is a matter of personal preference though and you should do whatever you feel is most comfortable. There are other items too you'll need such as a race belt, sun block and we'll cover these issues in another article.

KEY TRAINING CONCEPT – Heart Rate Training

Training for your first triathlon should be a simple process and your training time should maximize your fitness gains safely and effectively. That's why I recommend that you use a Polar training computer during much of your bike and run training. The heart rate monitor, who consists of a wristwatch and transmitter that you wear around your chest, functions as your own 'personal coach', keeping you within certain training zones and making your training time and efforts more effective.

To keep it simple, you'll be training in one of these three zones based on your maximum estimated heart rate (220 – Your Age).

BLUE ZONE = 60-70%: The ideal zone for recovery workouts, fat burning and endurance building

GRAY ZONE = 70-80%: This zone improves your cardiovascular fitness, muscle strength and endurance

RED ZONE = >80%: Higher heart rates for interval training and maximum speed development

TIME IS ON YOUR SIDE

Training for your first sprint triathlon requires that you have the ability to dedicate five to ten hours each week to your exercise program. Consistency and making every workout count is very important in order to 'toe the line' on race day fully prepared and ready to go. Make sure you don't miss workouts and you'll be 100% ready to go!

NUTRITION FOR TRAINING

One of the desired benefits of training for an Iron Girl triathlon is that you'll probably notice your clothes getting looser and that you'll drop a size (or two!). Yes, Triathlon training has a wondrous effect on your waistline – but only if you follow a good nutrition program.

Athletes eat for enjoyment but also to fuel their training activity. They tend to avoid high fat foods and refined products and focus on whole grains, lean protein sources, fruits and vegetables while eating several smaller (portion controlled) meals throughout the day. As a 'soon to be' Iron Girl triathlete, ask yourself, "How will this meal assist me with my training", every time you sit down to eat and you'll see a world of difference in your energy levels when you're training and when you're not!



THE FIRST STEP

Swimming:

Of the three disciplines, swimming will be the hardest for most people. Pool time is usually limited and sometimes inconvenient and swimming is a sport that many people don't adopt at an early age. Consider seeking swim stroke advice from someone nearby who is familiar with proper freestyle swim stroke mechanics. It's fine however to swim the 500 meters on race day doing the breast stroke or side stroke but make sure you're comfortable with the stroke in training first. Start slowly by swimming one length (25 yds) and rest at the wall whenever necessary. As your fitness improves, you'll be able to go further without resting so try to push yourself a little further with each workout and never worry about how fast you're going...just focus on covering the recommended distance in each workout. If you feel you can a little more, that's fine...but try not to exceed the recommended distances by more than 15%.

Biking:

Unlike the swim, in which we focus on distance (yards or meters), we'll focus on time when it comes to bike training. The goal here is to ride about 12 miles comfortably, or for just under one hour for most people.

I recommend that you split your bike training up between indoor and outdoor riding. Take group cycling classes at the gym for your indoor training or place your bike on an indoor bike trainer at home. For outdoor rides, find a local bike path or rural roads with low traffic volumes. Always be safe and talk to local cyclists about which roads are safe and which are not before heading out.

Your cycling technique should include a smooth cadence around 80-90 rpms, measured by a simple cyclometer. Set up your bike properly with just a slight bend in your knee when the pedal is at 6 o'clock position and go to your local bike shop for a bike fit session should you have any discomfort when riding.

Again, try to stay within the timeframes and intensities recommended in the program. If you want to extend your training a bit sometimes, that's fine – but remember that overdoing it can lead to overtraining and sometimes even injury. The cumulative effect of training consistently day after day is the key to a successful program and outcome on race day!

Running:

Start off by doing a combination of walking and running. For example, do one minute of brisk walking followed by 15 seconds of light jogging and repeat this pattern for the entire workout. As you become more comfortable, try to increase your running interval and shorten your walking interval. Eventually, you'll be running steadily for the entire 5K!



OTHER TRAINING CONSIDERATIONS

In addition to your sport specific training (Swimming, biking and running) also consider adding a resistance training component to your exercise routine. This can include yoga, Pilates or lightweight training. Performed two or three days each week for 20-30 minutes, resistance training will help you prevent injury while increasing lean tissue and bone density.

**Iron Girl Lake Sprint Triathlon
12-Week Training Plan for Beginners**

KEY:

BZ = Blue Zone

GZ = Gray Zone

RZ = Red Zone

RT = Resistance Training

TW = Transition Workout (Go from one sport to the next.)

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Wk. 12	Run/Jog 20-30 minutes (BZ)	20-30 min. RT	Swim 200 yds (or meters), Bike 20 minutes (BZ)	REST	Swim 200 yds, Run/Jog 20-30 minutes (BZ)	20-30 min RT, Bike 30 minutes (BZ)	Swim 200-250 yds, Bike 30 minutes (BZ)
Wk. 11	Run/Jog 20-30 minutes (BZ)	REST	20-30 min. RT, Bike 30 minutes (BZ)	Swim 250- 300 yds, Run/Jog 20-30 minutes (BZ)	Bike 30 minutes (BZ)	20-30 min. RT, Run/jog 20-30 minutes (BZ)	Swim 250- 300 yds, Bike 30- 45 minutes (BZ)
Wk. 10	REST	Run/Jog 20-30 minutes (BZ), 20-30 min. RT	Swim 300-350 yds, Bike 30- 45 minutes (BZ)	Bike 30 – 45 minutes (BZ), Run 20-30 minutes (BZ)	Swim 300-350 yds, 20 – 30 min. RT	REST	Swim 300-350 yds, Bike 30- 45 minutes (BZ)
Wk. 9	Run 20- 30 minutes	REST	Swim 350-400 yds,	TW: Bike 30 minutes (BZ) then	20-30 min. RT, run/jog	Swim 350-400 yds	Bike 35- 45 min. (BZ)

	(BZ), 20-30 min. RT		Bike 30- 45 minutes (BZ)	run/jog 20 minutes (BZ)	20-30 minutes (BZ)		
Wk. 8	Run 20- 30 min. (GZ), 20-30 min RT.	REST	Swim 400 yds, Run 20- 30 minutes (GZ)	TW: Bike 30 min. (BZ) then run 20 min. (BZ)	Swim 400 yds, bike 45 min (GZ)	20-30 min. RT, run 25- 35 min (BZ)	Bike 40- 50 min. (BZ)
Wk. 7	Run 25- 35 min. (GZ)	20-30 min. RT, Bike 30 min. (GZ)	Swim 400-450 yds, Run 25-35 min. (BZ)	TW: Bike 40 min. (BZ) then run 25 min. (BZ)	Swim 400-450 yds., Bike 45- 60 min. (GZ)	20-30 min. RT, run 25- 35 min. (BZ)	Swim 450 -500 yds, Bike 45- 60 min. (BZ)
Wk. 6	Run 30 – 40 min (GZ), 20-30 min. RT	REST	Swim 450-500 yds, run 30-40 min. (BZ)	TW: Bike 45 min. (GZ) then Run 30 min. (GZ)	Swim 450-500 yds, Bike 45-60 min. (BZ)	20-30 min RT, run 35- 45 min. (BZ)	Swim 450-500 yds, Bike 60 -75 min. (GZ)
Wk. 5	Run 45 Min. (RZ)	20-30 min RT	Swim 500-600 yds, run 40 – 50 min. (BZ)	TW: Bike 45 min. (GZ) then run 30 min. (GZ)	Swim 500-600 yds, Bike 30-45 min. (RZ)	REST	Swim 500-600 yds, Bike 60 – 75 min. (RZ)
Wk. 4	Run 50- 60 min. (BZ), 20-30 min RT	REST	Swim 500-600 yds, run 30-40 min. (RZ)	TW: Bike 45 min. (GZ) then run 30 min. (GZ)	Swim 500-600 yds., bike 30- 45 min. (RZ)	REST	Practice Race: Swim 500-750 yds, Bike 12- 15 miles then Run 3-4 Miles
Wk. 3	REST	Run 50- 60 min. (BZ), 20-30 min RT	Swim 500-600 yds, Bike 45 min. (BZ)	TW: Bike 45 min (GZ) then run 20-30 min. (GZ)	Swim 500-600 yds, Bike 45-60 min (RZ)	20-30 min. RT, Run 45 min (RZ)	Swim 500-600 yds, Bike 60 – 75 min (GZ)

Wk. 2	Run 40-50 min. (BZ), 20-30 min RT	REST	Swim 500-600 yds, Bike 40 min (RZ)	TW: Bike 45 min (GZ) then run 20-30 min (GZ)	Swim 600-700 yds, Bike 45-60 min. (BZ)	20-30 min RT	Swim 500 yds, Bike 60 minutes (RZ)
Wk. 1	Run 30 min (GZ), 20-30 min RT	REST	Swim 500 yds, Run 30 min (GZ)	TW: Bike 30 min. (GZ) then run 20 min (GZ)	REST	Early morning: 10-15 min. bike and 10-15 min. run (BZ)	RACE DAY! GOOD LUCK!

By following the basic structure of this training plan, you'll be well prepared to finish the sprint distance triathlon safely while having a memorable Iron Girl event experience. And the best news is that you'll be in the best shape of your life and primed to take on your next Iron Girl Race!