

## **FIRST TIME RACER? TRI THIS!**

**By Richard Bell**

I recently received an email from a colleague in Arizona whose client is about to start training for her first sprint triathlon. How, he wanted to know, could she finish this demanding three-sport race feeling good, without injury, and without having lost lean muscle tissue from so much aerobic training? A good question, and one that anyone considering their first triathlon should be thinking about right now, with approximately six months till race day.

Bookstores, of course, have shelves of information on triathlon training. My advice? Save your money. I have yet to read one that takes strength into consideration. And here's my radical theory: *before* you start your specific training in swimming, biking, and running, you need to spend at least six weeks building strength and structural balance. Knee problems, low back pain, or a weak core can and should be addressed *before* you get out on the track or into the pool — even if you feel weak in one of those sports and think you have to make up for lost time. Build strength and endurance now; worry about specifics later. And if you're not motivated enough by the prospect of competing injury-free, consider this: you're going to be faster.

Below is a six-week base strength program I designed for my colleague's client, a busy 30-year-old mother who, like a lot of other moms, has time to weight-train just twice a week and needs to get it done in under an hour. She suffers from quadriceps weakness, a result of ACL surgery she underwent a year ago. Also, she wants to drop body fat, which will certainly improve her work tolerance. Most importantly, she wants to beat her next-door neighbor, who is the same age and has already done a sprint triathlon.

Believe me, it's a challenging workout. It does *not* use the pink dumbbells from the room next door with all the loud music!

### **Early Season Sprint Training Workout**

Begin with 10 minutes on a stationary bike, alternating one minute at low tension with one minute at the highest intensity you can stand. Once this nauseating task is complete, proceed to the weight room for the following non-stop circuit. You must use a training weight that will allow only 10 repetitions to be performed on every lift. No resting between exercises!

- Dumbbell lunges.
- Incline bench presses, using a barbell
- Find a stool or stair just below knee height and perform step-ups, 10 reps per leg, holding dumbbells of an appropriate weight
- Lat pull-downs to the front
- Hamstring leg curls
- Triceps extensions

Your goal is to complete six rounds in 30 minutes, without resting. Once you're able to do this, increase your repetitions to 12. When you've met that challenge, increase your weight 2 to 5 percent.

Finish with a second 10-minute interval session on the bike. Guess what? You just finished this workout in 50 minutes, and it feels like two hours of training. Remember this piece of advice: "You can train hard or you can train long, but you can't train both long and hard."

I look forward to your comments and suggestions on this or any other workout.