



## **Adjusting Expectations**

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Part of any well-rounded athletic training program includes realistic goal setting. Goal setting can be as simple as losing X amount of weight and 'getting into better shape,' or include targeting a specific time / performance goal at a specific event. In the endurance athletic world the tendency is towards the latter although there is nothing wrong at all with the former.

As the season progresses, you should see measurable results via improved body composition, increased endurance, and increased speed at certain effort levels. These interim milestones allow you to adjust your future expectations upwards or downwards.

Interruptions and adjustments are a part of life. Most adult triathletes have multiple commitments including family harmony and work-related stress like travel, deadlines, and unsupportive bosses. Your initial goal of winning your age group in a big race may not be realistic after you had to spend two weeks visiting multiple job sites and working 15 hour days. Or you may run into the cold hard reality that you are not, in fact, Superman or Superwoman and can only burn the candle at both ends for a few days at a time before you need time off of training to mentally rest and relax.

In an ideal world, you will successfully handle all of the above as well as the sort of training required to meet your goals. You'll arrive at your goal race well-prepared to execute and meet or beat your personal goals.

However, that's not always the case. Everything in sum may become overwhelming. If this sounds like you, here are a few tips to keep yourself motivated and enjoying all the training you are able to complete.

Prioritize. Make sure you understand what is most important to you and then work from there. Most of us put more value into keeping our families happy and keeping our jobs.

Adjust your time commitment and performance goals. If your original Ironman season plan had your average hours set at 15 hours of training per week (for example), accept that this may be unrealistic for you. Slice a couple hours off and expect to be 5-10% slower than you would have been. You can still have a great day and will be in terrific shape.



Make it social. Endurance athletics is ultimately an individual sport where you excel through your personal work habits and individual ability. You can take some of the sting out of lowered expectations by expanding your worldview to value the social side of training with groups and friends.

Enjoy the little things. Rather than stress about not being able to repeat sub-6 minute miles (for example) on a running interval day, revel in the fact that you can do several miles at sub-6:30 pace and come back to train again the following day.

Take the long view. While this particular season or training cycle may not be the best you could have achieved had everything else in your life gone according to plan, doing the best you can with the time and energy you do have will set you up for future successes, when life outside of athletics may not be so challenging.

Success in endurance athletics is not built on one season of training and racing alone. You may have heard of the 10,000 hour rule. This is the idea that it takes that many hours of practice to become truly skilled in an endeavor. While it may not take quite that much time for each individual, it gives you some idea of the amount of work it takes to become really, really good. Those superfast athletes you are hoping to mix it up with did not start out that way. All of them have practiced consistently for years and years. No one can jam that much practice into just one season!

When push comes to shove, your satisfaction in sport is based on simple factors: Accepting your current limitations and doing the best you can to challenge those limitations within the framework of the rest of your life. Do that, and you will have the mental capacity to repeat the athletic goal setting process for the rest of your life. Rage against the machine and you will experience untimely burnout and frustration, which will negatively affect both your physical and mental well-being.

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