



Stanford Triathlon Team

Summer/Fall 2008 Newsletter

Race Reports!

Tour de France

July, 2008

Editor

Yes, the Tour de France... only harder! Stanford triathlete Jesse Czelusta decided to mark the passing of a friend by riding the Tour de France course this summer, staying a few hours ahead of the race the whole way and spending as little money as humanly possible (and raising funds for challenged athletes: www.ricksride.org).



As far as anyone knows, no one has been crazy enough to try such a thing before. When he asked for advice, a Tour veteran recommended that he not attempt it. Doing it on the cheap and unsupported was impossible icing on an already impossible cake. Madness.

But... he succeeded. He rode 4,000 kilometers. He raised thousands of dollars for challenged athletes. He got on French TV. He slept outside in the rain. He lugged 25 pounds of gear through the Alps on a pannier rack held together with duct tape and dried Gu. And on July 27, according to his blog:

CJ and I rode the final stage into Paris yesterday. Circling the cobblestones of the Arc de Triomphe was a moment of pure joy and disbelief. If it weren't for a beat-up old bicycle, an aching pair of knees, and an odometer that reads 4093 km, you would have a difficult time convincing me that I hadn't just awoken from a dream.

Fellow Stanford tri'er Tom Lee kept him company for the first four legs. (Tom was in town for the French Ironman and decided to stop by.) Friends, strangers, and the French media kept him company the rest of the way.

Tom shows up in France, with bread:



Summer Open Water Swim Series

Summer, 2008

Shyam "Sean" Panchal

This past summer a few of us raced alongside the purist swimmers—open water swim races, no wetsuits allowed.

The first one this summer was the Millerton Mile in Fresno California, on June 15th. This was a 1-mile race in beautiful Millerton Lake in Fresno California. This was my first open water swim race and it was awesome to finish!

The second race was scheduled for June 28th (my birthday!) but was moved to July 26th due to the fires this summer in Northern California. It was a 2-mile swim in Lake Mendocino. This was the championship swim. We were represented by Adrianne and Sean. Adrianne took 1st in her age group and 4th overall for the women! Sean took 2nd in his age group by default. Jodi Smith, Stanford Masters, took 1st overall for the women, and Stanford Masters also took 2nd overall for the men—an awesome day and a great road trip.

Vineman Races

August 2, 2008

Editor

It was hot. Really hot. It may or may not have broken 100 degrees, depending on who you ask. On August 2, a handful of Stanford triathletes and their entourages headed to wine country for the Vineman iron-distance race, Barb's Race (half iron), and Aquabike (iron-distance swim and bike). Representing the team were Mark Burkhardt, Alexa Merz, Jeff Solomon, Praj Kulkarni,

Stephanie Claussen, Sean Panchal, Naupaka Zimmerman, and Phil Esra, plus alum Dirk Englund. Most of us slept out on the lawn of the local high school (also T2) the night before—convenient and free.

The swim is the easiest 2.4 mile open-water swim you could hope for—warm water, gentle current, and shallow enough to stand up in if needed. (Some of the faster swimmers would've preferred slightly cooler water temps, but almost everyone wore a full wetsuit.) After the swim, things got tougher. The author spent the last 20 miles of the bike leg engaged in a thoughtful discussion with himself about the pro's and con's of finishing the day by running a marathon. The cool, rational conclusion was "heck no." Not until the author got off his bike did the author realize just how right (and obvious) that decision was. You can pack an awful lot of suffering into an event that long, even if you skip the running part.

Notable:

Naupaka arrived from Hawaii on a red-eye Friday morning, rented a car, met the team for dinner, slept on the ground, did the iron-distance race, drove back to Palo Alto Saturday night, then got on a plane Sunday morning to get to a conference.

Alexa was the fourth-fastest female aquabiker; Mark was 9th overall aquabiker after a questionable time penalty.

Alexa and Sean both had sub-2:00 T1 times.

Stephanie finished the half-iron Barb's Race, then capped off her day by crewing for Praj. Praj was the best-supported racer among us—his brother flew out from Philly just to cheer him on (and help everyone out however he could—thanks, bro!).

Thanks to Kathleen for helping to organize the event and for getting the severely pooped author home after the race.

Ironman Races

Summer, 2008

Editor

With the WCTCC conference's sprint races well behind them, Stanford triathletes went long this summer. Stanford tri'ers tore it up in iron-distance races all over the place:

Nor-Cal: Naupaka Zimmerman, Praj Kulkarni

Canada: Bob Marshall, Audrey Brown

New York: Bryan Ellis

France: Tom Lee

With a special mention for Jeff Solomon, who qualified for the half-iron world championships with his performance at a half-iron race in Washington.

Where Are They Now?

Profile: Cheri Blauwet, Paralympic Athlete

Editor

Where are they now? In Cheri's case, Beijing. And on TV, in those Visa commercials, kickin' it with omniscient-narrator-voice Morgan Freeman. Cheri promises to return to the triathlon team (and her life as a Stanford medical student) soon. She's been

training full time this year, building up to the 400, 800, and 5000 meter wheelchair events at the 2008 Paralympics.

In addition to tons and tons of grueling solo workouts, this year Cheri unpacked a secret weapon: she enlisted the help of world-class-pro-athlete trainers (and Stanford tri'ers) Kathleen O'Connor and Phil Esra. Kathleen and Phil's duties included operating a stopwatch, shouting encouragement, and gratuitously wearing a whistle.

On a few occasions, Cheri's workouts called for drafting. The draft device clamped to a seatpost, and Cheri would tuck in right behind it. Each workout left fresh tire marks on the draft flaps—Cheri was drafting close enough that she frequently bumped the flaps or the bike's rear tire. Cheri would call out speed adjustments to the cyclist (17+ mph), and the cyclist would warn her of pedestrians and road hazards (if the cyclist was not too winded).



Wish her luck in Beijing! Check out her website for results and more information. Speaking of her website... according to cheriblauwet.com:

Cheri Blauwet was born and raised on a farm near the small town of Larchwood, Iowa. She sustained a spinal cord injury in a farming accident as a young child. However, she was immediately encouraged to be active, involved, and to see disability as simply another way of living rather than as an impairment.

Upon entering high school, her track coach encouraged her to join the track team when he learned that Iowa held sanctioned wheelchair events at the state finals. By her sophomore year she had set records at the state level and began competing nationally. In 2000, she became a name on the international scene, bringing home 4 medals from the 2000 Paralympic Games in Sydney, Australia. Since then, she has achieved resounding success on the international elite racing circuit.



Bike Tips

Evan Pickett

Note: The bike leg of the triathlon is the most gear-intensive component of the sport. This is either a good thing or a bad thing, depending on whether you are rich. It is also the longest leg of the event, and a place where you can gain or lose a lot of time through small changes. These are some tips from Stanford cyclist and triathlete Evan Pickett. Notice that a lot of them don't cost money. Adapted from an email to the tri team "misc" list—thanks Evan! (<http://triathlon.stanford.edu/gettingstarted.shtml>) –Editor

Efficiency

In a triathlon, efficiency is incredibly important. If you are more efficient than your competitors, you can 1) go faster than they are or 2) go as fast as they are while using less energy. Efficiency is most important in swimming, then in running, then lastly in cycling. However, a very small amount of work can make a huge difference in your bike, while improving your swim stroke, upper-body strength, or running style may take years of training.

Fit

A good bike fit is the first step to better efficiency. For time trials or triathlons, this means being as aerodynamic as possible without sacrificing power output or comfort. For full or half-Ironman distances, comfort is more important, since you'll be on the bike for hours. In a sprint or Olympic distance event, you can sacrifice a little comfort, because you'll only be on the bike for 45 to 90 minutes.

There is no universal position on the bike that is best for all racers. And as you train, your optimum position may evolve as you get stronger. It probably won't be the same when you're 25 as it will be when you're 45. Back, hip, or knee problems may limit your positioning. I'm happy to offer advice, but advice from a relative neophyte is nothing compared to a good fit session with someone who knows what they're doing. For a thorough fit, get in touch with GoRide bikes (they'll set you up if you buy a bike there) or Curtis Cramblett (Curtis@RevolutionsInFitness.com).

The ideal position for shorter efforts (20 km to 40 km) is geared towards a flat upper back, a drop between the saddle and handlebars of up to 16 cm, an angle of ~90 degrees between your forearms and upper arms when in the elbows, and elbow pads that are no farther apart than the width of your hips.

For examples check out:

Fabian Cancellara, 2007 TdF prologue:

<http://youtube.com/watch?v=HA03vSHPBJo>

Various riders, 2007 TdF TT:

<http://youtube.com/watch?v=l0tvHWwWlQ4>

Chris Lieto, pro triathlete (more relaxed position for longer distances):

<http://www.lifesport.ca/images/LietoHawaii2006.JPG>

Sarah Hammer, champion track cyclist (wider aerobar spacing allows easier breathing without sacrificing aerodynamics):

http://womenscyclingchallenge.org/blog/media/IMG_8264-75.jpg

The ride

Being comfortable in the aerobars and on your bike makes a big difference. If your lower back can handle an hour in the aerobars, you'll expend less energy fighting the wind. If you can stay in the aerobars when the crosswinds pick up, you'll save time and energy versus being out on the hoods.

If you're comfortable cornering on a technical course, you'll maintain a higher average speed.

If you watch cyclists (time trialists and triathletes alike), you'll notice that there is very little upper body motion.

Their shoulders stay relaxed and the power comes from their lower core, hips, and legs. Triathletes seem to have notoriously low cadences, often around 60-70 rpm; this removes strain from your aerobic system and places it on your leg muscles. In the cycling world, strong time trialists often have cadences of 100-120 rpm (Lance Armstrong, Fabian Cancellara).

Each person has their own style - Jan Ullrich was the second-best cyclist of his generation, and he had a famously low cadence. Obviously, your legs are still going to get tired, but to maintain the same speed, at twice the cadence you are putting out less force per pedal stroke.

This keeps your legs fresher. For most of us, our aerobic systems can handle a few hours at an elevated heart rate, but our legs will get tired first. Keep the strain off your legs by consciously maintaining a higher cadence.

In a triathlon, the bike is an easy leg on which to eat and rest up. If you're going to be riding for an hour, hold back for the first 10 to 20 minutes. Don't eat right away - give yourself ~15 minutes to get settled in. Use this time to ramp your effort to a level you'll maintain for the middle portion of the bike. Eat and drink in the early to middle portions of the bike - you don't want to eat right after the swim or right before the run. If there are hills, take it easy at the start of the hill, then power over the top to keep your speed up on the descent. Take a few pedal strokes off on the descent to recover. In technical sections of a course, stay on the hoods, where you can reach your brakes - don't switch between the hoods and the aerobars every few seconds. Aerobars are for long straight sections, not corners, and not 100m long sections between corners.

Equipment

<http://www.bicycling.com/article/1,6610,s1-3-12-14995-1,00.html>

Aero cycling equipment can and does make a difference in performance, but good equipment will never, ever overcome a bad bike fit. If you are interested in upgrading your equipment, begin with an aero helmet, then an aero wheelset. Don't wear gloves unless conditions demand it.

Keep your head still - if you put your head down while wearing an oversized aero helmet, it'll catch the wind and slow you down. If you have separate race wheels, use high-quality clinchers with low rolling resistance (Michelin Pro Race or Vittoria Evo CX). If you have tubulars, Continental Sprinters are the best. (There are other good tires, but those offer the best combination of low rolling resistance and good flat protection.) Narrower tires have less rolling resistance than wider tires and can be run at higher pressures, but do not handle as well, especially on rougher pavement.

Stanford Triathlon sounds *freaking awesome*. How do I get involved?

Getting started

Your first stop should be our website: triathlon.stanford.edu. Check out the "getting started" page and the FAQ. The Stanford Triathlon Team is about promoting the "triathlon lifestyle" at Stanford and in the surrounding communities. From day to day, this means getting together with a great group of people and training for triathlons. The team accommodates a wide range of athletes, from casual weekend warriors to dedicated triathletes.

If you're a member of the Stanford community and want to start racing in triathlons or want some training company, we encourage you to join the email lists and check out the current training schedule on the website. (There are two lists; the "misc" list gets 99% of the traffic, while the regular list is mostly the coach's soapbox.)

How to subscribe

Send an e-mail to triathlon-join@lists.stanford.edu to subscribe to the main list, and triathlon-misc@lists.stanford.edu for the discussion list.

Alternatively you can subscribe online by visiting:

<https://mailman.stanford.edu/mailman/listinfo/triathlon>

<https://mailman.stanford.edu/mailman/listinfo/triathlon-misc>

Responsibilities

Below are the responsibilities and benefits that come with being a team member:

- Before you can participate in any practice or race, you must complete the Club Sports Waiver and the Triathlon Team Rules (on the website). These can be turned in to any officer at any practice. Please also fill out and hand in the questionnaire on the website so we can get some idea what your background, goals, etc. are.
- You must pay dues each quarter.
- You must fulfill the team fundraising requirements (usually, one big team job consisting of The Stanford Fund letter writing and one smaller team job per quarter).
- If you are taking triathlon as a class (ATH 151C) for credit, you must attend at least two practices per week and fulfill the above requirements to receive a passing grade.

Benefits

Team members who complete the above requirements are eligible for the following:

- Coaching: team members receive professional coaching from our coach.
- Sponsorship discounts: team members can take advantage of great discounts on triathlon gear from our sponsors.
- Race subsidies: team members receive significant registration fee and travel subsidies for scheduled races.
- Team events: team members can attend events sponsored by the team.

Financial Aid

If you are unable to pay team dues, it is possible to get Financial Aid from Stanford to cover the costs. Check out the website for more info.

Frequently Asked Questions

What exactly is a triathlon?

Swim, Bike, Run! A triathlon consists of those three events in that order. Between each leg of the race is a quick "transition" where you change any clothing and equipment if necessary. Traditionally, the swim portion takes place in open water, such as in a bay or lake, but in our collegiate races, it often is in a swimming pool.

I don't have a decent bike. Can I still be on the team?

Absolutely! At the beginning of the season, don't worry about it. Any bike will do. Many of the triathletes currently on the team started on campus or mountain bikes. As you start training, you may decide that you want to upgrade to a better road bike. If you are going to use your campus bike, we ask that you make sure your bike is in safe operating condition (particularly the wheels and brakes). And, no matter what bike you use, you must wear a helmet on all rides. [The editor bought his current bike frame online, and scavenged the components from a bike bought at Target.]

How do I find a new bike?

You'll be keeping up with the pack a lot easier on a road bike: road bikes are much lighter and have thin tires that are inflated to high pressures to reduce rolling resistance. The Stanford Triathlon Team is sponsored by Specialized Bicycles, who make good bikes of all varieties and price ranges. They offer team members high quality bikes at a generous discount. All that is required of you is that you pay dues and complete your club jobs. The best way to find a bike for you is to talk to a lot of people and take advantage of the knowledge at the bike shops. Start with a visit to the team sponsor, GoRide. If you aren't ready to take the plunge and buy a new road bike, the campus bike shop rents good bikes out at reasonable prices.

What other equipment do I need?

For swimming, you need your swimsuit and a pair of goggles. (If you're a guy, don't worry; speedos aren't required.) For running, you just need a decent pair of running shoes.

I can't really swim. Can I still be on the team?

No problem. At the beginning of the year, we spend time during swim practices focusing on basic technique and form. There is always a wide range of swimming abilities on the team, so, no matter what your skill level is, you won't feel out of place. [The editor can't really swim.]

I'm pretty good at two of the sports, but I struggle in the third. Is that ok?

Yes, that's what we're here for! We'll teach you the basics of swimming, biking, and running and we'll help you improve if you already have a strong background in these events. All athletes, including those on our team, have both strengths and weaknesses - we don't expect you to be any different. [The editor can't really swim.]

When are practices?

During the academic year, we generally have 1 team practice per day, with one recommended off day per week. On most days, we practice only 1 of the 3 sports, but once or twice per week we have a "brick", which involves a bike ride followed immediately by a short run. In general, the swim practices will be in the morning before class, and the bike rides and runs will be in the afternoon and on weekends. Check out the website for our current practice schedule.

How much of a time commitment is it?

However much you want it to be! Although we encourage you to come to as many practices as you can (since it's so fun and we like seeing your face), nobody will give you an evil glare if you can't make it out.

The team seems kind of hard-core. What if I want to train and get in shape but not race?

That's totally fine. You won't be pressured to race, just practicing with the team is a great way to get in shape, have fun, and meet a bunch of cool people. Maybe later down the road you'll decide to take advantage of our discounted races (for team members) and try one out.

What are the club requirements?

In order to practice with the team, we ask only that you pay the membership dues for the quarter and that you give your best effort at each practice. Since we are a club sport and do all of our own fundraising, we also ask that you do 1 or 2 team jobs per quarter - you will hear more about this later.

How long is each leg of a triathlon?

It varies... The collegiate National Championship race is Olympic distance, which means a 0.93-mile (1.5 km) swim, 24.8-mile (40 km) bike and 6.2 mile (10 km) run. Most of our races, though, are Sprint distance, which is approximately half of the Olympic distance. Those of you whose weakest event is swimming should note that the swim leg is almost always the shortest event in terms of time!

Does the team travel?

We are part of the new West Coast Collegiate Triathlon Conference, and winter quarter, we will travel around CA to go to races hosted by other teams in our conference. We also have our own race, the Stanford Treeathlon, which will be held in February or March.

Tell me a little about the people on the team.

We come from a wide variety of backgrounds. Some of us swam, biked or ran at some earlier time in our lives. Some of us had no experience in any of the three sports. The team is approximately evenly divided between men and women. Also, there is a huge range of ages: we have many undergraduate and graduate students, as well as some employees of Stanford.

Who is allowed to join?

All members of the Stanford community are welcome - that includes students, alumni, faculty, staff, and their spouses.

Does the team hang out together outside of practice?

Definitely. We periodically have team parties and social functions, perfect for team bonding. We want to emphasize team coherence this year, since a team that has fun together is a team that races well together!

For more information: triathlon.stanford.edu

Lose weight fast: triathlon.stanford.edu

When in doubt: triathlon.stanford.edu

All things to all people: triathlon.stanford.edu

triathlon.stanford.edu