BEST ADVICE FOR 1ST TIME IRONMAN ATHLETES

1. **Figure out YOUR plan:** Ignore all the posts of people you seeing riding/running/posting workouts. You are not them. The fact is, 95% of Ironman athletes (not just first-timers) are doing it WRONG! Stick with what your coach is providing you or the plan that you have chosen to follow.

2. **Know the course:** It's important to know the swim venue, bike course, and elevation of both bike and run course. This will help you decide how long you think you will be out there (to plan your nutrition) and help with equipment (what kind of gears will you need on the bike….will you be finishing in the dark, will it be cold, will you need a long sleeved shirt to put on?)

3. **Listen to your body:** Regardless of what your coach is prescribing you or what your plan is giving you, if you are not feeling well, you're feeling a nagging pain in your knee, etc., you need to re-evaluate. Maybe you need to change the plan. Perhaps you need another rest day. Start with the end in mind. If you become injured before your event, you have a less likely chance to finish. Be aware of your body and pay attention to the signs it is giving you.

4. **Avoid overtraining:** This maybe should have been the very first point. The most common mistake first-time Ironman athletes make is overtraining. YES – they are training TOO MUCH! Remember that your body does not get stronger from that 80 mile ride you did – it becomes stronger by letting the muscles repair and recover from that ride! You must add in the "down time" and recovery days if you are to finish well. If your Iron-distance event is in September, you really don't need to be riding centuries (100 miles) in May and June! You are better off going into your race undertrained vs. overtrained. The ideal scenario is to be trained and tapered perfectly.

5. **Schedule in "race rehearsal" days:** This means waking up at the time you will wake up on race day, eating what you plan to eat for breakfast on race day, wearing what you plan to wear on race day, planning your nutrition you plan to use on race day, pacing what you plan to pace on race day, etc. Planning these days allows you to figure out what is not working the way you planned and make adjustments to achieve the desired goal.

6. **Pace yourself:** Ironman is a LONG day, even for the winners! Some of us are out there for 17 hours - just because you CAN ride 20mph on that bike doesn't mean you should! The swim should be treated as a warm-up, the bike, steady and super comfortable. The run – again, easy, relaxed until the last half or even last 6 miles of the event. That is

when the going gets hard. You will need to know you conserved in the earlier parts of your event and that you have the ability to keep going.

7. **Strengthen your mental game:** Even the most physically fit, physically strong athletes can fail at an event like Ironman. In endurance sports, the mental game is just as important (if not more) than the physical one. Your mind "quits" way before your body does. Begin your mental toughness routine when you begin training. Just like any other muscle, you must exercise it if you want it to become stronger.

8. **Make a checklist:** Particularly if you are traveling some distance to get to your event. Start getting your things together in the week before the event. There are few things more stressful than getting to your venue only to realize you forgot your favorite pair of goggles or the nutrition you are used to using. Make the list, go through it – 2 or 3 times if you have to. Minimalism is great and encouraged, but make sure you have the essentials.

9. **Respect the taper:** When your coach tells you it's time to taper – back off your training load – do it. Yes, it can be uncomfortable. It can make you feel fidgety or restless. It's important. You have worked so hard to achieve this goal and there is nothing in the closing weeks that you can do to make your race a better one. However, there are things you can do that will make it worse. Enjoy the taper. Embrace it.

10. **Enjoy the experience:** This doesn't just mean the race itself. It means to enjoy the process. You will put in countless hours of swim, bike, run, strength and whatever else you are going to do. Love what you are doing. When you get to the race venue to check in – step back. You made it to the starting line! Realize you are doing something that so many people cannot do. Respect the distance and all your fellow athletes who are toeing the line with you. Everyone has their own story of how and why they got there. Now it's time to focus on you and do what you went there to do. You will become an Ironman. Stick to your plan, enjoy your journey, thank the volunteers and remember your accomplishment forever.