

When not working at my day job, practicing law in St Petersburg, I frequently announce at area Triathlons, and in my capacity as Vice President of USA Triathlon, I see many good and not so good things done by Triathletes. I'd like to give my top five suggestions to insure an enjoyable and safe experience.

#5: Do SOME training before entering your first race. I know, this seems basic to most, but I'm constantly amazed how many people think anyone can do this without training. There is a mountain of information out there to help; please don't be the "weekend warrior" and jeopardize yourself or others.

#4: Take time to check your equipment, especially your bicycle. With the first duathlon of the season less than two months away, and the first Triathlon not long after, don't wait 'til race morning to see if you have any weak cables, loose nuts and bolts, or dry rotted tires. Goggle straps don't stay strong forever either, especially swimming in salt water, so think of replacing your swim goggles for the new season. And while you're at it, put a spare pair in your tri bag just in case. Don't forget your helmet, either literally on race day, or for safety check as well. According to helmet manufacturers the heat destroys the Styrofoam; buy a new one every two to three years; it's your head, so protect it at all times.

#3: Spend a bit of time learning the rules; USA Triathlon has a rules book; you can ask for one; as well as study them on line (USATriathlon.org.). The great races, such as St. Anthony's and the Florida Race Place Ft. DeSoto series (Escape, Top Gun, and Suncoast) always print the major rules and place them on line and in your race packet. Rules are to make sure we have a fair and safe race. It's your obligation to know them, and play fair.

#2: Train with friends who also do tri's. You'll be amazed how much you can learn by watching other experienced athletes. Join a tri club such as the St. Pete Mad Dogs; it's easier, safer and more

fun.

#1: Be early and have a plan on race morning. I can't tell you how often we see Triathletes arriving within five minutes of race start, nonchalantly strolling in with their bike and tri gear, expecting to have plenty of room for their gear in transition, and for the rest of the race to wait for them. At many races one of the biggest expenses is ensuring the safety of the athletes. Those police waiting for the race to start COST MONEY! The later the race has to start, the more possibility of dangerous vehicular traffic on the roads. **RULE OF THUMB:** arrive on race site at least one hour prior to the first wave start of the day. Be courteous to your fellow athletes; there is no place in our sport, especially at sprint races, for coolers, chairs, or other personal comfort items inside transition. Transition area is turned into a hazard zone for others when you place anything not being used to race; a transition towel, shoes (bike and run), helmet, bike, number belt, sunglasses, and your bike are all you need to race. Stop setting up campsites, People!!

Rest up, get ready, the 2010 season is right around the corner!

Enjoy your race! we want to see smiles coming across the finish line.

See you at the races!

Brian Harrington, Race Announcer
Vice President, USA Triathlon Board of Directors
Representing the Florida District