

Throughout the 1980s a certain triathlete trained hard but with incredible monotony. He completed the same rides and runs on the same routes day after day after day. The only real variation in his training was that he tried to go faster and faster over those same routes as race day drew nearer. That triathlete was none other than Dave Scott, and the repetitiveness of his training did not stop him from winning the Hawaii Ironman six times.

Simplicity is a virtue in Ironman training (and in triathlon training generally) because it minimizes the mental stress of the training process and makes it easy to chart and track progress. When you're doing the same types of workouts over and over, it's plain to see when your performance is improving.

Naturally, there must be some variation in your Ironman training, but not as much as many athletes might believe. First, the overall volume of training and the duration of the longest swims, rides and runs must increase as the plan unfolds. After all, an Ironman is an extreme endurance test and increasing training volume and workout duration is how you build endurance. Second, there should be some variation in the intensity of your training, with moderate-intensity, moderately high-intensity, and high-intensity workouts regularly performed in each discipline. This is because different training intensities build fitness in different and complementary ways, so that a multi-intensity program builds greater fitness with a smaller time commitment than an all-moderate-intensity training plan would. Finally, like your long, endurance-building workouts, your higher-intensity workouts should become increasingly race-specific as you go along, specifically by demanding that you sustain relatively high speeds for longer periods of time.

Here's a 20-week Ironman training plan based on the principle of simplicity. It's a relatively low-volume plan that is appropriate for less experienced and competitive athletes and for athletes of any level of experience and competitiveness who don't have a lot of time to train. The plan prescribes three swims, three rides and three runs (plus one or two short transition runs in the latter part of the schedule) per week. Monday is always a rest day and every fourth week is a reduced-volume recovery week. There is only a handful of different types of workouts, each of which has a simple format and is simple to execute.



TRAINING PLAN KEY

Easy ride/run

Ride or run the designated duration at a steady, comfortable pace.

Endurance ride/run/swim

Ride, run or swim the designated duration at a steady, moderate pace.

Interval ride/run

Perform the designated number of intervals at the highest intensity level you can

sustain through the end of the last interval without bonking. Recover after each interval with easy spinning or jogging for a duration equal to twice that of the hard interval. Warm up with at least 10 minutes of easy riding or running and cool down long enough to reach the designated total workout duration.

Interval swim

Swim the designated number of intervals in the main set (MS) at the highest speed you can sustain through the

end of the last interval without bonking. Rest on the wall for 10 seconds after 25- to 75-yard intervals, rest 15 seconds after 100- to 200-yard intervals, and rest 20 seconds after intervals longer than 200 yards. Apportion the remainder of the prescribed total workout distance to warm-up and cool-down yardage and to drill, kick and pull sets.

Swim time trial

Swim the designated time-trial distance as though it were a race. Apportion the remainder

of the designated total workout distance to a warm-up and a cool-down.

Tempo ride/run

Ride or run the first part of the total duration at a comfortable pace. Ride or run the last part at an effort level that feels challenging yet still relatively comfortable.

Transition run

Immediately after you complete the prescribed bike workout, put on your running shoes and run the designated duration at a comfortable pace.

	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
WEEK 1	Interval Bike: 40 min. w/ 6 x 20 sec. sprints Interval Swim: MS: 8 x 25y (1,000y total)	Easy Run: 5 miles	Interval Swim: MS: 4 x 100y (1,000y total) Easy Bike: 40 min.	Interval Run: 40 min. w/ 6 x 20 sec. relaxed sprints	Endurance Bike: 25 miles	Endurance Run: 6 miles Endurance Swim: 1,000y
WEEK 2	Interval Bike: 40 min. w/ 8 x 20 sec. sprints Interval Swim: MS: 10 x 25y (1,100y total)	Easy Run: 5 miles	Interval Swim: MS: 5 x 100y (1,100y total) Easy Bike: 45 min.	Interval Run: 40 min. w/ 8 x 20 sec. relaxed sprints	Endurance Bike: 30 miles	Endurance Run: 7 miles Endurance Swim: 1,250y
WEEK 3	Interval Bike: 40 min. w/ 10 x 20 sec. sprints Interval Swim: MS: 12 x 25y (1,200y total)	Easy Run: 5 miles	Interval Swim: MS: 6 x 100y (1,200y total) Easy Bike: 45 min.	Interval Run: 45 min. w/ 8 x 20 sec. relaxed sprints	Endurance Bike: 35 miles	Endurance Run: 8 miles Endurance Swim: 1,500y
WEEK 4 Recovery	Interval Bike: 40 min. w/ 6 x 20 sec. sprints Interval Swim: MS: 10 x 25y (1,200y total)	Easy Run: 5 miles	Interval Swim: MS: 5 x 100y (1,200y total) Easy Bike: 45 min.	Interval Run: 40 min. w/ 6 x 20 sec. relaxed sprints	Endurance Bike: 30 miles	Endurance Run: 6 miles Endurance Swim: 1,200y
WEEK 5	Tempo Bike: 45 min. w/ last 15 min. comfortably hard Interval Swim: MS: 10 x 50y (1,500y total)	Easy Run: 5.5 miles	Interval Swim: MS: 4 x 150y (1,500y total) Easy Bike: 45 min.	Interval Run: 40 min. w/ 6 x 1 min. fast	Endurance Bike: 40 miles	Endurance Run: 9 miles Endurance Swim: 1,700y
WEEK 6	Interval Bike: 45 min. w/ 8 x 1 min. fast uphill Interval Swim: MS: 8 x 50y, 8 x 25y (1,600y total)	Easy Run: 6 miles	Interval Swim: MS: 4 x 200y (1,600y total) Easy Bike: 45 min.	Tempo Run: 45 min. w/ last 15 min. comfortably hard	Endurance Bike: 45 miles	Endurance Run: 10 miles Swim Time Trial: MS: 800y time trial (1,800y total)

Note: Mondays are rest days.

	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
WEEK 7	Tempo Bike: 50 min. w/ last 20 min. comfortably hard Interval Swim: MS: 12 x 50y (1,700y total)	Easy Run: 6 miles	Interval Swim: MS: 5 x 150y (1,700y total) Easy Bike: 50 min.	Interval Run: 40 min. w/ 10 x 1 min. fast uphill	Endurance Bike + Transition Run: 50 miles easy bike + 10-min. easy run	Endurance Run: 11 miles Endurance Swim: 2,100y
WEEK 8 Recovery	Interval Bike: 45 min. w/ 6 x 90 sec. fast Interval Swim: MS: 16 x 50y (1,500y total)	Easy Run: 6 miles	Interval Swim: MS: 8 x 100y (1,500y total) Easy Bike: 45 min.	Tempo Run: 45 min. w/ last 15 min. comfortably hard	Endurance Bike: 40 miles	Endurance Run: 8 miles Endurance Swim: MS: 1,600y steady (1,800y total)
WEEK 9	Tempo Bike + Transition Run: 55 min. bike w/ last 20 min. comfortably hard + 10-min. easy run Interval Swim: MS: 8 x 75y (1,900y total)	Easy Run: 6 miles	Interval Swim: MS: 4 x 250y (1,900y total) Easy Bike: 50 min.	Interval Run: 45 min. w/ 8 x 2 min. fast	Endurance Bike + Transition Run: 55 miles easy bike + 10-min. easy run	Endurance Run: 12 miles Endurance Swim: 2,400y
WEEK 10	Interval Bike + Transition Run: 55 min. bike w/ 8 x 2 min. fast + 10-min. easy run Interval Swim: MS: 10 x 50y, 10 x 25y (2,100y total)	Easy Run: 6 miles	Interval Swim: MS: 6 x 150y (2,100y total) Easy Bike: 55 min.	Tempo Run: 50 min. w/ last 20 min. comfortably hard	Endurance Bike + Transition Run: 60 miles easy bike + 15-min. easy run	Endurance Run: 10 miles Endurance Swim: 2,700y
WEEK 11	Tempo Bike + Transition Run: 1 hr. bike w/ last 20 min. comfortably hard + 10-min. easy run Interval Swim: MS: 10 x 75y, 10 x 25y (2,300y total)	Easy Run: 6 miles	Interval Swim: MS: 5 x 200y (2,300y total) Easy Bike: 1 hr.	Interval Run: 45 min. w/ 8 x 2 min. fast	Endurance Bike + Transition Run: 65 miles easy bike + 10-min. easy run	Endurance Run: 13 miles Endurance Swim: 3,000y
WEEK 12 Recovery	Interval Bike + Transition Run: 50 min. bike w/ 8 x 1 min. fast + 10-min. easy run Interval Swim: MS: 15 x 50y (1,800y total)	Easy Run: 6 miles	Interval Swim: MS: 12 x 100y (1,800y total) Easy Bike: 50 min.	Tempo Run: 40 min. w/ last 12 min. comfortably hard	Endurance Bike + Transition Run: 50 miles easy bike + 15-min. easy run	Endurance Run: 10 miles Endurance Swim: 2,400y
WEEK 13	Tempo Bike + Transition Run: 1 hr. 10 min. bike w/ last 20 min. comfortably hard + 10-min. easy run Interval Swim: MS: 18 x 50y (1,500y total)	Easy Run: 6.5 miles	Interval Swim: MS: 4 x 300y (2,500y total) Easy Bike: 1 hr.	Interval Run: 50 min. w/ 10 x 2 min. fast	Endurance Bike + Transition Run: 70 miles easy bike + 10-min. easy run	Endurance Run: 14 miles Endurance Swim: 3,000y

Note: Mondays are rest days.

	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
WEEK 14	Interval Bike + Transition Run: 1 hr. 10 min. bike w/ 10 x 2 min. hard + 10-min. easy run Interval Swim: MS: 8 x 100y, 8 x 25 y (2,600y total)	Easy Run: 6.5 miles	Interval Swim: MS: 2 x 400y, 4 x 100y (2,600y total) Easy Bike: 1 hr. 15 min.	Tempo Run: 1 hr. w/ last 20 min. comfortably hard	Endurance Bike + Transition Run: 55 miles easy bike + 20-min. easy run	Endurance Run: 11 miles Endurance Swim: 3,300y
WEEK 15	Tempo Bike + Transition Run: 1 hr. 15 min. bike w/ last 25 min. comfortably hard + 10-min. easy run Interval Swim: MS: 6 x 75y, 6 x 50y (2,800y total)	Easy Run: 7 miles	Interval Swim: MS: 4 x 300y, 4 x 100y (2,800y total) Easy Bike: 1 hr. 15 min.	Interval Run: 55 min. w/ 5 x 3 min. fast	Endurance Bike + Transition Run: 85 miles easy bike + 10-min. easy run	Endurance Run: 16 miles Endurance Swim: 3,800y
WEEK 16 Recovery	Interval Bike + Transition Run: 1 hr. bike w/ 10 x 2 min. hard + 10-min. easy run Interval Swim: MS: 16 x 50y (2,300y total)	Easy Run: 6 miles	Interval Swim: MS: 2 x 400y, 4 x 100y (2,300y total) Easy Bike: 1 hr.	Tempo Run: 50 min. w/ last 15 min. comfortably hard	Endurance Bike + Transition Run: 50 miles easy bike + 15-min. easy run	Endurance Run: 10 miles Swim Time Trial: MS: 1,650y as fastest as possible (2,400y total)
WEEK 17	Tempo Bike + Transition Run: 1 hr. 20 min. bike w/ last 30 min. comfortably hard + 10-min. easy run Interval Swim: MS: 10 x 100y, 10 x 50y (3,000y total)	Easy Run: 7 miles	Interval Swim: MS: 4 x 400y (3,000y total) Easy Bike: 1 hr. 20 min.	Interval Run: 1 hr. w/ 3 x 5 min. fast	Endurance Bike + Transition Run: 100 miles easy bike + 10-min. easy run	Endurance Run: 18 miles Endurance Swim: 4,000y
WEEK 18	Interval Bike + Transition Run: 1 hr. 20 min. bike w/ 3 x 5 min. hard + 10-min. easy run Interval Swim: MS: 8 x 75y, 8 x 50y, 8 x 25y (3,000y total)	Easy Run: 7 miles	Interval Swim: MS: 4 x 300y, 4 x 100y (3,000y total) Easy Bike: 1 hr. 30 min.	Tempo Run: 1 hr. w/ last 25 min. comfortably hard	Endurance Bike + Transition Run: 70 miles easy bike + 1-hour easy run	Easy Run: 5 miles Endurance Swim: 4,000y
WEEK 19	Tempo Bike + Transition Run: 1 hr. bike w/ last 20 min. comfortably hard + 10-min. easy run Interval Swim: MS: 10 x 100y, 10 x 50y (2,600y total)	Easy Run: 7 miles	Interval Swim: MS: 4 x 400y (2,600y total) Easy Bike: 1 hr.	Interval Run: 45 min. w/ 6 x 2 min. fast	Endurance Bike + Transition Run: 50 miles easy bike + 10-min. easy run	Endurance Run: 10 miles Endurance Swim: 4,000y
WEEK 20	Interval Bike: 45 min. w/ 6 x 1 min. hard Interval Swim: MS: 10 x 50y (2,200y total)	Easy Run: 5 miles	Interval Swim: MS: 4 x 300y (1,600y total) Easy Bike: 30 min.	Easy Run: 30 min.	Easy Bike: 20 min.	IRONMAN!

Note: Mondays are rest days.