



John Segnitz/johnsegnitz.com

A Super Simple Half-Ironman Training Plan

BY MATT FITZGERALD

Variety is overrated in triathlon training. It's certainly important, but coaches often make it out to be more important than repetition when the opposite is true. There are only a handful of workout types that you need to include in your training program. You can practice these basic types of workouts in all kinds of different ways, and doing so may make the training process more interesting for you, but there is no particular physiological advantage of complex training compared to basic training.

I favor simple training plans for a few reasons. First, I find them to be less mentally stressful than complex training plans. Why make your training so complex that it is unnecessarily mentally taxing in addition to being necessarily physically taxing? Second, the results of a very basic and highly repetitive training plan are predictable, and predictability of effects is a major virtue in a training plan. You want to know exactly what you're going to get out of it. When your workouts are always familiar, there's little mystery about what they will do for you. Finally, it's easier to measure and monitor progress in a training plan with lots of repetition. You can make apples-to-apples comparisons of your performance in different instances of the same workout, whereas such

comparisons are more difficult when you never do the same workout twice. This is important because seeing progress inspires future progress.

Of course, a training plan has to have some variation. First, the overall workload

has to increase as it goes along. Second, the key workouts must become more race-specific. The following is a super simple 16-week training plan for half-iron-distance racing. It features nine workouts per week—three swims, three rides and three runs—and is appropriate for “intermediate” level athletes.

You will find the workout descriptions self-explanatory for the most part, but the intensity and pacing guidelines require some explanation. Here's a key to understanding them:

KEY	
5K RACE PACE	An effort performed at approximately the fastest pace you could sustain in a 5K running race.
10K RACE PACE	An effort performed at approximately the fastest pace you could sustain in a 10K running race.
COMFORTABLY HARD	An effort that is right on the threshold of making you really suffer.
EASY	A very comfortable effort, deliberately slower than your natural pace in swimming, cycling or running.
HARD	An effort that is very challenging but not maximal for the prescribed duration (such that a two-minute hard effort is performed at a slightly faster pace than a three-minute hard effort).
JOG	Very slow running.
MODERATE	An effort that feels comfortable but not dawdling.
RACE PACE	An effort performed at your anticipated half-iron-distance race pace.
SPRINT	A 100 percent maximal effort.
TIME TRIAL	A maximal effort relative to the prescribed distance.

TRAINING

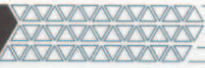
WEEK 1		WEEK 2	
MONDAY	Rest.	MONDAY	Rest.
TUESDAY	Bike 40 minutes moderate with 4 x 30-second sprints scattered.	TUESDAY	Bike 40 minutes moderate with 6 x 30-second sprints scattered.
WEDNESDAY	Swim 800 yards total. Main set: 8 x 25 yards, rest interval (RI) = 20 seconds. (Do a warm-up, technique drills and cool-down to meet total yardage.) Run 4 miles moderate + 2 x 10-second hill sprints.	WEDNESDAY	Swim 850 yards total. Main set: 10 x 25 sprints, RI = 20 seconds. Run 4 miles moderate + 4 x 10-second hill sprints.
THURSDAY	Bike 40 minutes moderate.	THURSDAY	Bike 40 minutes moderate + 5 minutes comfortably hard.
FRIDAY	Swim 800 yards total. Main set: 3 x 100 yards race pace, RI = 15 seconds. Run 4 miles moderate.	FRIDAY	Swim 850 yards total. Main set: 4 x 100 yards race pace, RI = 15 seconds. Run 4 miles moderate.
SATURDAY	Bike 20 miles moderate.	SATURDAY	Bike 25 miles moderate.
SUNDAY	Run 6 miles moderate. Swim 800 yards moderate.	SUNDAY	Run 7 miles moderate. Swim 1,000 yards moderate.
WEEK 3		WEEK 4 (RECOVERY)	
MONDAY	Rest.	MONDAY	Rest.
TUESDAY	Bike 40 minutes with 8 x 30-second sprints scattered.	TUESDAY	Bike 40 minutes with 6 x 30-second sprints scattered.
WEDNESDAY	Swim 900 yards total. Main set: 12 x 25 sprints, RI = 20 seconds. Run 4 miles moderate + 6 x 10-second hill sprints.	WEDNESDAY	Swim 800 yards total. Main set: 8 x 25 sprints, RI = 20 seconds. Run 4 miles moderate + 4 x 10-second hill sprints.
THURSDAY	Bike 40 minutes moderate + 8 minutes comfortably hard.	THURSDAY	Bike 40 minutes moderate + 5 minutes comfortably hard.
FRIDAY	Swim 900 yards total. Main set: 3 x 200 yards race pace, RI = 15 seconds. Run 4.5 miles moderate.	FRIDAY	Swim 800 yards total. Main set: 3 x 100 yards race pace, RI = 15 seconds. Run 4 miles moderate.
SATURDAY	Bike 30 miles moderate.	SATURDAY	Bike 25 miles moderate.
SUNDAY	Run 8 miles moderate. Swim 1,200 yards moderate.	SUNDAY	Run 7 miles moderate. Swim 1,000 yards moderate.

Continued on pg. 90 ▶



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WEEK 5

MONDAY	Rest.
TUESDAY	Bike 45 minutes with 8 x 1-minute hard efforts scattered.
WEDNESDAY	Swim 1,000 yards total. Main set: 6 x 50 sprints, RI = 20 seconds. Run 4.5 miles with 6 x 30-second hard efforts scattered.
THURSDAY	Bike 40 minutes moderate + 8 minutes comfortably hard.
FRIDAY	Swim 1,000 yards total. Main set: 2 x 200 yards race pace, RI = 30 seconds. Run 4.5 miles moderate + 4 x 10-second hill sprints.
SATURDAY	Bike 35 miles moderate + 10-minute transition run at moderate pace.
SUNDAY	Run 9 miles moderate. Swim 1,400 yards moderate.

WEEK 6

MONDAY	Rest.
TUESDAY	Bike 45 minutes with 6 x 2-minute hard efforts scattered.
WEDNESDAY	Swim 1,100 yards total. Main set: 8 x 50 sprints, RI = 20 seconds. Run 4.5 miles with 6 x 45-second hard efforts scattered.
THURSDAY	Bike 40 minutes moderate + 10 minutes comfortably hard.
FRIDAY	Swim 1,100 yards total. Main set: 3 x 200 yards race pace, RI = 30 seconds. Run 4.5 miles moderate + 4 x 10-second hill sprints.
SATURDAY	Bike 40 miles moderate.
SUNDAY	Run 10 miles moderate. Swim 1,600 yards total. Main set: 1,000-yard time trial.

WEEK 7

MONDAY	Rest.
TUESDAY	Bike 45 minutes with 4 x 3-minute hard efforts scattered.
WEDNESDAY	Swim 1,200 yards total. Main set: 10 x 50 sprints, RI = 20 seconds. Run 4.5 miles with 6 x 1-minute hard efforts scattered.
THURSDAY	Bike 40 minutes moderate + 12 minutes comfortably hard.
FRIDAY	Swim 1,200 yards total. Main set: 3 x 200 yards race pace, RI = 20 seconds. Run 5 miles moderate + 4 x 10-second hill sprints.
SATURDAY	Bike 45 miles moderate + 15-minute transition run at moderate pace.
SUNDAY	Run 11 miles moderate. Swim 1,800 yards moderate.

WEEK 8 (RECOVERY)

MONDAY	Rest.
TUESDAY	Bike 40 minutes with 6 x 1-minute hard efforts scattered.
WEDNESDAY	Swim 1,000 yards total. Main set: 8 x 50 sprints, RI = 20 seconds. Run 4.5 miles with 6 x 30-second hard efforts scattered.
THURSDAY	Bike 40 minutes moderate + 8 minutes comfortably hard.
FRIDAY	Swim 1,000 yards total. Main set: 2 x 200 yards race pace, RI = 20 seconds. Run 4 miles moderate.
SATURDAY	Bike 35 miles moderate.
SUNDAY	Run 9 miles moderate. Swim 1,400 yards moderate.

Continued on pg. 92 ▶

TRAINING



Mike Wilson

WEEK 9		WEEK 10	
MONDAY	Rest.	MONDAY	Rest.
TUESDAY	Bike 50 minutes with 6 x 2-minute hard efforts scattered.	TUESDAY	Bike 50 minutes with 5 x 3-minute hard efforts scattered.
WEDNESDAY	Swim 1,300 yards total. Main set: 6 x 75 sprints, RI = 20 seconds. Run 1 mile easy, 8 x 600m at 5K race pace with 400m jog recoveries, 1 mile easy.	WEDNESDAY	Swim 1,400 yards total. Main set: 8 x 75 sprints, RI = 20 seconds. Run 1 mile easy, 6 x 800m at 5K race pace with 400m jog recoveries, 1 mile easy.
THURSDAY	Bike 40 minutes moderate + 15 minutes comfortably hard.	THURSDAY	Bike 40 minutes moderate + 18 minutes comfortably hard.
FRIDAY	Swim 1,300 yards total. Main set: 2 x 300 yards race pace, RI = 30 seconds. Run 5 miles moderate + 4 x 10-second hill sprints.	FRIDAY	Swim 1,400 yards total. Main set: 2 x 300 yards race pace, RI = 20 seconds. Run 5.5 miles moderate + 4 x 10-second hill sprints.
SATURDAY	Bike 50 miles moderate + 20-minute transition run at moderate pace.	SATURDAY	Bike 55 miles moderate.
SUNDAY	Run 12 miles moderate. Swim 2,000 yards moderate.	SUNDAY	Run 13 miles moderate. Swim 2,000 yards total. Main set: 1,500 time trial.

WEEK 11		WEEK 12 (RECOVERY)	
MONDAY	Rest.	MONDAY	Rest.
TUESDAY	Bike 55 minutes with 4 x 4-minute hard efforts scattered.	TUESDAY	Bike 45 minutes with 5 x 2-minute hard efforts scattered.
WEDNESDAY	Swim 1,500 yards total. Main set: 10 x 75 sprints, RI = 20 seconds. Run 1 mile easy, 5 x 1,000m at 5K race pace with 400m jog recoveries, 1 mile easy.	WEDNESDAY	Swim 1,300 yards total. Main set: 6 x 75 sprints, RI = 20 seconds. Run 2 miles easy, 1 mile at 10K race pace, 2 miles easy.
THURSDAY	Bike 40 minutes moderate + 20 minutes comfortably hard.	THURSDAY	Bike 40 minutes moderate + 10 minutes comfortably hard.
FRIDAY	Swim 1,500 yards total. Main set: 3 x 300 yards race pace, RI = 30 seconds. Run 6 miles moderate + 4 x 10-second hill sprints.	FRIDAY	Swim 1,300 yards total. Main set: 2 x 300 yards race pace, RI = 30 seconds. Run 5 miles moderate.
SATURDAY	Bike 60 miles moderate + 10-minute transition run at race pace.	SATURDAY	Bike 45 miles moderate.
SUNDAY	Run 14 miles moderate. Swim 2,200 yards moderate.	SUNDAY	Run 10 miles moderate. Swim 2,000 yards moderate.

Continued on pg. 94 ▶

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WEEK 13

MONDAY	Rest.
TUESDAY	Bike 20 minutes easy, 20 minutes comfortably hard, 20 minutes easy.
WEDNESDAY	Swim 1,600 yards total. Main set: 6 x 100 sprints, RI = 20 seconds. Run 2 miles easy, 2 miles at 10K race pace, 2 miles easy.
THURSDAY	Bike 45 minutes with 5 x 2-minute hard efforts scattered.
FRIDAY	Swim 1,600 yards total. Main set: 2 x 400 yards race pace, RI = 30 seconds. Run 6 miles moderate + 4 x 10-second hill sprints.
SATURDAY	Bike 50 miles moderate + 10 miles race pace + 15-minute transition run at race pace.
SUNDAY	Run 10 miles moderate + 2 miles race pace. Swim 2,200 yards total. Main set: 500 yards race pace.

WEEK 14

MONDAY	Rest.
TUESDAY	Bike 20 minutes easy, 25 minutes comfortably hard, 15 minutes easy.
WEDNESDAY	Swim 1,800 yards total. Main set: 8 x 100 sprints, RI = 20 seconds. Run 2 miles easy, 3 miles at 10K race pace, 2 miles easy.
THURSDAY	Bike 45 minutes with 4 x 3-minute hard efforts scattered.
FRIDAY	Swim 1,600 yards total. Main set: 2 x 400 yards race pace, RI = 20 seconds. Run 6 miles moderate + 4 x 10-second hill sprints.
SATURDAY	Bike 45 miles moderate + 15 miles race pace + 20-minute transition run at race pace.
SUNDAY	Run 12 miles moderate + 2 miles race pace. Swim 2,400 yards total. Main set: 600 yards race pace.

WEEK 15

MONDAY	Rest.
TUESDAY	Bike 15 minutes easy, 30 minutes comfortably hard, 15 minutes easy.
WEDNESDAY	Swim 2,000 yards total. Main set: 10 x 100 sprints, RI = 20 seconds. Run 2 miles easy, 3 miles at 10K race pace, 2 miles easy.
THURSDAY	Bike 45 minutes with 8 x 1-minute hard efforts scattered.
FRIDAY	Swim 1,600 yards total. Main set: 2 x 400 yards race pace, RI = 30 seconds. Run 4.5 miles moderate + 4 x 10-second hill sprints.
SATURDAY	Bike 40 miles moderate + 10 miles race pace + 10-minute transition run at race pace.
SUNDAY	Run 12 miles moderate + 2 miles race pace (beat last week's time). Swim 2,400 yards total. Main set: 600 yards race pace (beat last week's time).

WEEK 16 (RACE WEEK)

MONDAY	Rest.
TUESDAY	Bike 10 minutes easy, 10 minutes comfortably hard, 10 minutes easy.
WEDNESDAY	Swim 1,300 yards total. Main set: 5 x 100 sprints, RI = 20 seconds. Run 2 miles easy, 1 mile at 10K race pace, 2 miles easy.
THURSDAY	Bike 45 minutes with 5 x 30-second sprints scattered.
FRIDAY	Swim 800 yards total. Main set: 400 yards race pace. Run 3 miles easy.
SATURDAY	Swim 10 minutes easy with 4 x 30 seconds at race pace. Bike 10 minutes with 4 x 30 seconds fast. Run 10 minutes with 4 x 20 seconds at 90 percent effort.
SUNDAY	RACE!