

Mastering the Brick

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Triathlon is a uniquely challenging endurance sport in that it combines the successfully seamless linking together of swimming, biking, and running. The part of this that tends to challenge us the most is running off the bike. One effective means of training for the run in a triathlon is the use of brick workouts. These are workouts that combine cycling with running just as we experience it in a triathlon. Here we will describe 5 key brick workouts: what each workout trains, instructions for the workout, and how to best use the workout in your overall scheme of training.

Moderate Endurance Brick

What it Trains

The Moderate Endurance brick trains overall aerobic endurance as well as the physical and mental skills of running after riding.

Instructions

1. Bike for 45' to 1.5H at an aerobic level (70-80% of your MHR for cycling) using the first 15' as a warm-up to gradually bring your HR to your training zone. Also in the warm-up, you may like to practice pedaling skills in cooperation with the rest of your training.
2. Transition to running clothes and shoes. Keep in mind that you do not have to rush this as you would in a race. You will gain the desired benefits as long as you start your run within 5' of completing your ride.
3. Run for 30' to 45' at an aerobic level (70-80% of your MHR for running). In the initial few minutes, focus extra attention on good running form. After 5 to 15' you should begin to feel comfortable running. Maintain optimal form for the completion of the run.
4. Cool-down with some easy walking and/or mobility exercises.

When, Why, for Whom

As long as the time durations used are appropriate for the distance of racing you are preparing for and your level of fitness, the Moderate Endurance Brick can and should be used by almost all multisport athletes almost year round. The only prerequisite is the ability to already be able to very comfortably be able to run for 45'. This is simply steady aerobic training with the added benefit of teaching the

athlete to better handle the biomechanical, metabolic, and mental demands of running off the bike. Use these year round in accordance with the overall direction of your yearly training schedule.

Long Run Emphasis Brick

What it Trains

The Long Run Emphasis brick trains the ability to run for a long time after riding as you do in ½ IM and Ironman racing. It's a more specific way to prepare for the run of a ½ IM or Ironman.

Instructions

1. Bike for 1-4H at estimated ½ IM or Ironman race pace using the first 15' as a gradual warm-up.
2. Transition to a run lasting from 75' to 2H with some of the initial portion at goal race pace depending on the length of your peak race, your level of previous training, where you are in your periodization scheme for the year, and other individual considerations.

Special Note

Being a very specific race preparation workout, it would be wise to use this kind of workout as a "practice race" (I.e. Eat your planned pre-race breakfast, wear your race clothes, practice your pacing strategies, race nutrition strategies, and mental strategies,).

When, Why, for Whom

The Long Run Emphasis Brick is for athletes in final stages of preparation for a ½ IM or Ironman race (or long duathlon). It should only be performed 1-2 times with at least 14 days between sessions and your last one should be 14-28 days out from your race.

Routine Running off the Bike

What it Trains

Routine Running off the Bike does just that. It helps to make running off the bike a second nature skill allowing an athlete to adapt quickly and find his/her "running legs" more easily.

Instructions

1. At the end of any bike ride, transition to a 10' run. You can go 5' out from your home, turn around and come back. This simple, not very time consuming activity, will help you learn to run off the bike and make it feel "normal". It should after all; it's part of your sport.

When, Why, for Whom

Anyone with a consistent base of aerobic endurance, strength training, and the ability to run comfortably for 30-45' can do these workouts. They can be done year round as often as 1-3 times per week as long as overall recovery from all training is factored into the programming.

Variation

Do you take Spinning classes in the wintertime? Try short 5-10' runs on the treadmill right after your class.

Long Ride Emphasis Brick

What it Trains

The Long Ride Emphasis Brick trains the ability to ride long, while pacing appropriately to be able to run afterward. Also, this workout trains the ability to run after a very long ride as experienced in ½ IM and Ironman racing.

Instructions

1. Ride from 2-5H anywhere from aerobic pace to just over estimated race pace.
2. Transition to a run lasting between 20' to 1H at similar intensity.

When, Why, for Whom

The Long Ride Emphasis Brick can be used, by varying the duration and intensity, during most of the year for ½ IM and Ironman athletes. It is a fundamental workout for an athlete who has developed the appropriate base to race long triathlons since riding typically accounts for 65% of a triathlon. These workouts help to make better use of your time than simply doing long rides.

Cross Training Brick (Warm Weather and Cold Weather Versions)

What it Trains

The Cross Training Brick develops general aerobic endurance while also teaching the general ability to smoothly transition from one activity to another.

Instructions (Warm Weather)

1. Begin at a lake, pond, or the ocean. Swim a course of 20-30' in a variety of strokes (breaststroke & backstroke are great ones).
2. Back at shore, perform in-line skating, hiking, or mountain biking for 45' to 2H.
3. Finish with a pick up game of beach volleyball with your friends!

Instructions (Cold Weather)

1. Begin by cross-country skiing for 30-45'.
2. Transition to 30-45' of snowshoe hiking or running.
3. Finish by skiing again for 30-45'

4. Then don't forget to build a snowman for your cool-down!

When, Why, for Whom

For anyone seeking a good aerobic training session at any time of the year. These are also good for the athlete seeking variety in their training.

Variations

There are endless variations of Cross Training Bricks. The only limit is your imagination.

Abbreviations Used in the Brick Workouts

' Minute(s)
" Second(s)
H Hour(s)
MHR Maximum Heart Rate

Some Additional Notes

As you can see, there are virtually an unlimited number of brick workouts that you can perform. In fact, there are so many more that we could just not mention all of them here because of space limitations. We want to leave you with a few additional ideas to help you create the best brick workouts for yourself:

1. Keep in mind that the specific durations and intensities of workouts will be different for each of you. We created the general guidelines for these workouts to be helpful to a large audience.
2. All training is best done when training with high levels of skill is the number one priority. In each of the workouts described above, you will gain the most benefit if you consciously are working on your biking and running skills during the sessions.
3. Stuck inside in the winter? Do brick workouts at your gym using a spin bike, stationary bike, or indoor bike trainer and a treadmill. Or you may find many winter conditions suitable for an indoor ride on an indoor trainer followed by an outdoor run.
4. Have fun!! No other sport allows you to do more than one activity in a continuous fashion!

To learn more about Jason, Will, and Tri-Hard Endurance Sports Coaching:
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