

A group of triathletes in a huddle, wearing swim caps and athletic gear, with one person in the center having their hands clasped in a celebratory gesture. The image is dark and serves as a background for the text.

EVEN SPLITSLAB

SPRINT TRIATHLON

TRAINING PLAN

BEGINNER • 12 WEEKS

HOW TO USE THIS PLAN

WHO IT'S FOR

You can swim 400m (rest breaks are fine), ride for 30 minutes, and run for 20 minutes. Not all on the same day. By week 10 you'll swim the full 750m race distance in one go.

HOW IT'S BUILT

The plan follows the periodization order Joe Friel describes in *The Triathlete's Training Bible*: a long, easy Base, a recovery week, then race-specific Build and Peak work. It's an original plan based on his published principles, not Friel's own plan, and not endorsed by him.

WEEK 1 IS A TEST WEEK

Three field tests in the first week: bike Monday, swim Tuesday, run Thursday. They set your zones, so every session from week 2 has a real number behind it. Protocols are on page 3. Retests are in week 8.

THE WEEKLY PATTERN

Six sessions a week. Monday is always rest. Tuesday is the key bike session, Thursday the key run, Saturday the long run, Sunday the long ride or brick. Move days to fit your life, but keep one easy day between key sessions.

ZONES AND PACES

Bike and run intensity uses threshold heart-rate zones. Swim sets use CSS, your threshold swim pace per 100m. Both come from the week 1 tests. No heart-rate monitor? Use the "How it feels" column on page 3 instead.

WHAT THE SHORTHAND MEANS

WU warm-up. **CD** cool-down. **Strides** 15–20 sec of quick, relaxed running, not a sprint. **Race effort** what you expect to hold on race day, roughly Z3–Z4. **CSS +10** 10 sec per 100m slower than CSS pace.

BRICK WORKOUTS

A brick is a ride followed immediately by a run. They start in week 9, always after an easy ride, and the run is short on purpose: 5 min, then 15, then 20. The point is running on cycling legs, not adding a hard session.

OPEN WATER

Open water starts in week 8. Always swim with others and stay near shore. A pool session works as a substitute whenever you can't get to open water.

RECOVERY WEEKS

Week 4 is deliberately short and easy, with no testing. Week 8 is four easy days followed by the three retests. Don't add sessions in either one. That's when the previous weeks turn into fitness.

FUELLING

Under an hour, water is usually enough. On the longer Sunday rides from week 7, take in some carbs around the 45-minute mark and use those sessions to practise race-day nutrition.

MISSED SESSIONS

Don't double up. Skip it and carry on. If you miss a full week, repeat the previous week rather than jumping ahead.

IF YOU READ NOTHING ELSE

- 01** Test in week 1. Every number after it depends on that week.
- 02** Keep easy days easy. Zone 2 should feel too easy.
- 03** Take the recovery weeks exactly as written.

ZONES AND FIELD TESTS

Do these in week 1 and again in week 8. Three tests, three different days.

BIKE AND RUN – THE 20-MINUTE FIELD TEST

- 1

Warm up 10–15 min, including three short pickups.
- 2

Ride or run 20 min solo at the hardest steady pace you can hold for the whole 20. A race, not an interval.
- 3

Hold back for the first 5 min, then decide every 5 min whether you can go harder. Most people fade.
- 4

Cool down 10 min.

THE MATH

**AVG HR × 0.95 =
THRESHOLD HR**

170 avg × 0.95 = 162 bpm. With a power meter the same test gives FTP.

ZONE	RUN	BIKE	HOW IT FEELS
Z1 RECOVERY	<85%	<81%	Very easy. You could sing.
Z2 AEROBIC	85–89%	81–89%	Easy conversation. Could go for hours.
Z3 TEMPO	90–94%	90–93%	Comfortably hard. Short sentences.
Z4 SUB-THRESHOLD	95–99%	94–99%	Hard. A few words at a time.
Z5A THRESHOLD	100–102%	100–102%	Very hard but controlled. Race-effort ceiling.

Percentages are of threshold heart rate. Friel's system has two zones above Z5a; this plan doesn't use them. Sustained work around threshold pays off more for beginners, and it's closer to how you'll race a sprint. Test bike and run on different days — run heart rate usually sits a little higher.

SWIM – THE CSS TEST (400M + 200M)

- 1

Warm up 4×50m easy and 4×25m building.
- 2

Swim 400m for time at the hardest even pace you can hold. Short stops at the wall are fine on your first attempt, but keep the clock running.
- 3

Rest 5–10 min. Easy 4×25m is fine.
- 4

Swim 200m for time, same approach.

CSS PACE PER 100M

(T400 – T200) ÷ 2

8:00 (480 sec) and 3:50 (230 sec) gives (480 – 230) ÷ 2 = 125 sec, or 2:05 per 100m.

WRITTEN AS	PACE	USED FOR
EASY	CSS +20 or slower	Warm-ups, cool-downs, drills, recovery.
STEADY	CSS +10 to +15	Most Base main sets.
CSS +5	5 sec slower than CSS	Build main sets.
CSS	Your CSS pace	Peak and race-effort sets.
RACE	About CSS	The effort you hold for the full 750m.

No monitor or pace clock? The plan still works. Use the "How it feels" column and swim by effort. Retest bike, swim, and run in week 8.

TWELVE WEEKS AT A GLANCE

WK	PERIOD	HOURS	FOCUS
01	TEST WEEK	3:18	Bike, swim, and run field tests. Everything else easy.
02	BASE 1	3:17	Cadence drills, strides, drill-heavy swims.
03	BASE 1	3:52	First seated hill climbs. Long run 35 min.
04	RECOVERY	2:45	Short and easy. No testing.
05	BASE 2	3:56	First Zone 3 tempo on the bike. Long run 40 min.
06	BASE 2	4:29	First tempo run. Long run 45 min.
07	BASE 2	4:44	500m continuous swim. Long run 50 min. 75 min ride.
08	RECOVERY + RETESTS	3:20	First open water. Bike, swim, and run retests.
09	BUILD	4:40	Zone 4 intervals. CSS-paced swims. First brick.
10	BUILD	5:00	Hardest week. 750m continuous swim. 15 min brick run.
11	PEAK	3:55	Race-effort bike and run. Longest brick run.
12	RACE WEEK	2:15	Taper. Course previews. Race Sunday.

HOW THE PERIODS WORK

- WK 1

TEST WEEK. Three field tests plus easy sessions. Your zones and CSS pace come out of this week.
- WK 2-3

BASE 1. Aerobic endurance, technique, force. Almost all easy effort, drills in every swim, strides on the run, seated hill climbs from week 3.
- WK 4

RECOVERY. Short, easy sessions. No testing. This is when the previous weeks turn into fitness.
- WK 5-7

BASE 2. Zone 3 tempo work appears and gets longer each week. The long run builds to 50 min, the long ride to 75.
- WK 8

RECOVERY + RETESTS. Four easy days, then the bike, swim, and run retests. Expect the biggest change in your run number.
- WK 9-10

BUILD. Zone 4 intervals on bike and run, CSS-paced swims, and the first bricks. Week 10 is the hardest week.
- WK 11

PEAK. Volume drops, intensity stays. Race-effort work moves into the standalone bike and run sessions.
- WK 12

RACE WEEK. Taper. Short sharpening sessions early, easy course previews Thursday and Friday, full rest Saturday.

COACH TIP

Start with the tests. Zones from a formula are a guess; these take one week and make every session after them mean something. Start each test conservatively — most people go out too hard and fade, which gives a useless number.

MON

BIKE

THRESHOLD TEST

45 min TEST

WU 15 min easy with 3×30 sec pickups. 20 min solo, steady, hard effort — start conservative and reassess every 5 min. CD 10 min. Threshold HR = $\text{avg HR} \times 0.95$. FTP = $\text{avg power} \times 0.95$ (power meter only).

DONE ☐ EFFORT _____

TUE

SWIM

CSS TEST
(400 + 200)

1100m TEST

WU 4×50m easy (20 sec rest) + 4×25m building. 400m time trial at the hardest even pace you can hold — short stops at the wall are fine on the first test, but keep the clock running. Rest 5–10 min (easy 4×25m is fine). 200m time trial, same approach. CD 4×50m easy. CSS per 100m = $(T400 - T200) \div 2$.

DONE ☐ EFFORT _____

WED

REST

REST DAY

—

No session. Two tests down, one to go.

DONE ☐ EFFORT _____

THU

RUN

THRESHOLD TEST

35 min TEST

WU 10 min: 5 min walk, 5 min easy jog. 20 min solo, steady, hard effort on a flat route. CD 5 min walk. Threshold HR = $\text{avg HR} \times 0.95$.

DONE ☐ EFFORT _____

FRI

SWIM

TECHNIQUE

500m EASY

WU 4×50m easy, 20 sec rest. Drills 4×25m side kick, 20 sec rest. Main 2×50m easy (CSS +20 or slower), 20 sec rest. CD 2×50m easy.

DONE ☐ EFFORT _____

SAT

RUN

EASY RUN

25 min Z2

First run in real zones. Easy Z2, walk breaks are fine.

DONE ☐ EFFORT _____

SUN

BIKE

ENDURANCE

35 min Z2

First ride in real zones. Steady Z2 on a flat or rolling route.

DONE ☐ EFFORT _____

COACH TIP Zone 2 will probably feel too easy. That’s correct. If you can’t talk in full sentences, slow down. Strides are quick and relaxed, not sprints.

MON REST DAY — No session. Sleep, stretch, and let the week before land. DONE ☐ EFFORT _____	TUE BIKE CADENCE 40 min Z2 10 min Z1–Z2. 5×1 min high cadence (90+ rpm), 2 min easy between. 15 min Z2. DONE ☐ EFFORT _____	WED SWIM TECHNIQUE 700m EASY WU 4×50m easy, 20 sec rest. Drills 6×25m alternating catch-up and side kick, 20 sec rest. Main 5×50m easy (CSS +20), 20 sec rest. CD 2×50m easy. DONE ☐ EFFORT _____	THU RUN EASY + STRIDES 20 min Z2 15 min Z2. 4×15 sec strides, 45 sec walk between. DONE ☐ EFFORT _____	FRI SWIM AEROBIC 700m Z2 WU 4×50m easy, 20 sec rest. Drills 4×25m fingertip drag, 20 sec rest. Main 3×100m steady (CSS +15), 30 sec rest. CD 2×50m easy. DONE ☐ EFFORT _____	SAT RUN LONG RUN 30 min Z2 Easy Z2. Walk breaks are fine. DONE ☐ EFFORT _____	SUN BIKE LONG RIDE 55 min Z2 Steady Z2 throughout. DONE ☐ EFFORT _____
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COACH TIP

Seated hill climbs build strength without a gym. Stay in the saddle, keep the cadence low, and stop if your knees complain. Biggest week of Base 1.

MON REST DAY — No session. Sleep, stretch, and let the week before land. DONE ☐ EFFORT _____	TUE BIKE FORCE (HILLS) 45 min Z3 15 min Z2. 4×2 min seated climb at 60– 70 rpm in Z3, spin down easy between. Z2 to finish. Stop if knees complain. DONE ☐ EFFORT _____	WED SWIM AEROBIC 850m Z2 WU 4×50m easy, 20 sec rest. Drills 6×25m, 20 sec rest. Main 4×100m steady (CSS +15), 30 sec rest. CD 2×50m easy. DONE ☐ EFFORT _____	THU RUN EASY + STRIDES 25 min Z2 20 min Z2. 5×15 sec strides, 45 sec walk between. DONE ☐ EFFORT _____	FRI SWIM AEROBIC 800m Z2 WU 4×50m easy, 20 sec rest. Drills 4×25m, 20 sec rest. Main 2×150m steady (CSS +15, 40 sec rest) + 2×50m (20 sec rest). CD 2×50m easy. DONE ☐ EFFORT _____	SAT RUN LONG RUN 35 min Z2 Easy Z2. DONE ☐ EFFORT _____	SUN BIKE LONG RIDE 65 min Z2 Steady Z2. Bring water and a snack. DONE ☐ EFFORT _____
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COACH TIP Nothing hard this week and no testing. The last three weeks turn into fitness now, not while you were doing them. Don't add sessions because you feel good.

MON REST REST DAY — No session. Sleep, stretch, and let the week before land. DONE ☐ EFFORT _____	TUE BIKE EASY 30 min Z1 Easy spin, Z1–Z2. DONE ☐ EFFORT _____	WED SWIM EASY TECHNIQUE 600m EASY WU 4×50m easy. Drills 4×25m. 4×50m easy. CD 2×50m easy. 20 sec rest throughout. DONE ☐ EFFORT _____	THU RUN EASY 20 min Z1 Very easy, Z1– Z2. Recovery, not training. DONE ☐ EFFORT _____	FRI SWIM EASY 500m EASY WU 4×50m easy. Drills 4×25m. 4×50m easy. 20 sec rest throughout. DONE ☐ EFFORT _____	SAT RUN LONG RUN (EASY) 30 min Z2 Relaxed Z2. Shorter than last week on purpose. DONE ☐ EFFORT _____	SUN BIKE ENDURANCE 45 min Z2 Easy Z2. DONE ☐ EFFORT _____
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COACH TIP

First tempo work on the bike. Zone 3 should feel comfortably hard, not desperate. The long run gets longer every week from here.

MON REST DAY — No session. Sleep, stretch, and let the week before land. DONE ☐ EFFORT ☐	TUE BIKE TEMPO 45 min Z3 15 min Z2. 2×8 min Z3, 4 min easy between. 10 min easy. DONE ☐ EFFORT ☐	WED SWIM AEROBIC 900m Z2 WU 4×50m easy, 20 sec rest. Drills 4×25m. Main 3×150m steady (CSS +15), 30 sec rest. CD 3×50m easy. DONE ☐ EFFORT ☐	THU RUN EASY + STRIDES 25 min Z2 20 min Z2. 6×15 sec strides. DONE ☐ EFFORT ☐	FRI SWIM ENDURANCE 900m Z2 WU 4×50m easy, 20 sec rest. Drills 4×25m. Main 2×200m steady (CSS +15), 45 sec rest. CD 4×50m easy. DONE ☐ EFFORT ☐	SAT RUN LONG RUN 40 min Z2 Easy Z2. Walk steep hills if HR climbs out of zone. DONE ☐ EFFORT ☐	SUN BIKE LONG RIDE 60 min Z2 Steady Z2. DONE ☐ EFFORT ☐
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COACH TIP

First tempo run. If the Zone 3 blocks leave you gasping, you've drifted into Zone 4. Back off and hold the zone.

MON

REST

REST DAY

—

No session.
Sleep, stretch,
and let the week
before land.

DONE ☐ EFFORT ☐

TUE

BIKE

FORCE + TEMPO

50 min Z3

15 min Z2. 4×3
min seated climb,
low cadence,
Z3. Then 10
min steady Z3.
Easy to finish.

DONE ☐ EFFORT ☐

WED

SWIM

AEROBIC

1000m Z2

WU 4×50m easy,
20 sec rest.
Drills 4×25m.
Main 4×150m
steady (CSS +10),
30 sec rest. CD
2×50m easy.

DONE ☐ EFFORT ☐

THU

RUN

TEMPO

30 min Z3

10 min Z2. 2×5
min Z3, 2 min
easy jog between.
8 min Z2.

DONE ☐ EFFORT ☐

FRI

SWIM

ENDURANCE

1000m Z2

WU 4×50m easy,
20 sec rest.
Drills 4×25m.
Main 2×300m
steady (CSS +15),
45 sec rest. CD
2×50m easy.

DONE ☐ EFFORT ☐

SAT

RUN

LONG RUN

45 min Z2

Longest run so
far. Easy Z2.

DONE ☐ EFFORT ☐

SUN

BIKE

LONG RIDE

70 min Z3

Steady Z2 with
10 min Z3 in
the middle.

DONE ☐ EFFORT ☐

COACH TIP

Biggest Base 2 week. Practise eating on Sunday's ride: take a gel or a snack around 45 minutes. Better to find out what your stomach tolerates now.

MON REST DAY — No session. Sleep, stretch, and let the week before land. DONE ☐ EFFORT _____	TUE BIKE TEMPO 50 min Z3 12 min Z2. 2×12 min Z3, 4 min easy between. 10 min easy. DONE ☐ EFFORT _____	WED SWIM AEROBIC + STRONG 1000m CSS WU 4×50m easy, 20 sec rest. Drills 4×25m. Main 5×100m steady (CSS +10, 20 sec rest), then 2×50m at CSS +5 (30 sec rest). CD 2×50m easy. DONE ☐ EFFORT _____	THU RUN TEMPO 35 min Z3 10 min Z2. 2×8 min Z3, 2 min easy jog between. 7 min easy. DONE ☐ EFFORT _____	FRI SWIM CONTINUOUS 1000m Z2 WU 4×50m easy, 20 sec rest. Drills 4×25m. Main 500m continuous at an even pace (CSS +10 to +15). CD 4×50m easy. DONE ☐ EFFORT _____	SAT RUN LONG RUN 50 min Z2 Easy Z2. DONE ☐ EFFORT _____	SUN BIKE LONG RIDE 75 min Z2 Longest ride so far. Gel or snack around 45 min to practise fuelling. DONE ☐ EFFORT _____
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COACH TIP Three tests in three days, after four easy ones. Expect the biggest change in your run number — week 1’s run test was limited by how long you could run, not by your threshold.

MON REST REST DAY — No session. Sleep, stretch, and let the week before land. DONE ☐ EFFORT _____	TUE BIKE EASY 25 min Z1 Easy spin, Z1-Z2. DONE ☐ EFFORT _____	WED SWIM FIRST OPEN WATER 20-30 min EASY Swim with others, stay near shore, rest when needed. Practise sighting. No open water? Easy 600m pool swim. DONE ☐ EFFORT _____	THU RUN EASY + STRIDES 25 min Z1 Easy run, Z1-Z2. 4x15 sec strides at the end. DONE ☐ EFFORT _____	FRI BIKE THRESHOLD RETEST 45 min TEST Same protocol as week 1. Update your bike zones before Tuesday. DONE ☐ EFFORT _____	SAT SWIM CSS RETEST (400 + 200) 1100m TEST Same protocol as week 1. Aim to swim the 400m without stopping this time. Update CSS before Wednesday. DONE ☐ EFFORT _____	SUN RUN THRESHOLD RETEST 40 min TEST WU 10 min easy jog with 3x20 sec pickups. 20 min solo, steady, hard effort. CD 10 min. Update run zones — expect a bigger change than the bike. DONE ☐ EFFORT _____
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COACH TIP

Build starts. Hard sessions are meant to be hard, which means the easy ones have to stay easy. Sunday's brick has a 5-minute run. That's deliberate: it's about the feeling, not the distance.

MON

REST

REST DAY

—

No session.
Sleep, stretch,
and let the week
before land.

DONE

☐

EFFORT

TUE

BIKE

THRESHOLD INTERVALS

55 min Z4

15 min Z2. 3×6 min Z4, 3 min Z1 between.
Easy to finish.

DONE

☐

EFFORT

WED

SWIM

CSS

1100m CSS

WU 4×50m easy,
20 sec rest.
Drills 4×25m.
Main 7×100m at CSS +5, 20 sec rest. CD 2×50m easy.

DONE

☐

EFFORT

THU

RUN

THRESHOLD INTERVALS

35 min Z4

10 min Z2 + 4 strides. 3×4 min Z4, 2 min easy jog between.
9 min easy.

DONE

☐

EFFORT

FRI

SWIM

OPEN WATER / ENDURANCE

1100m Z2

Open water if possible:
3 race-start practices (30 hard strokes, then settle),
sight every 6–8 strokes, 2×300m steady. Pool:
WU 4×50m,
2×400m at CSS +10 (45 sec rest), CD 2×50m.

DONE

☐

EFFORT

SAT

RUN

LONG RUN

45 min Z2

Easy Z2. Resist the urge to push.

DONE

☐

EFFORT

SUN

BRICK

FIRST BRICK

60 + 5 min Z2

Steady Z2 ride. Change shoes quickly and run 5 min easy Z2. Heavy legs for the first couple of minutes are normal.

DONE

☐

EFFORT

COACH TIP

Hardest week of the plan. Friday's swim is the full race distance. If the numbers look daunting, look back at week 1.

MON REST DAY — No session. Sleep, stretch, and let the week before land. DONE ☐ EFFORT _____	TUE BIKE THRESHOLD INTERVALS 60 min Z4 15 min Z2. 3×8 min Z4, 3 min Z1 between. Easy to finish. DONE ☐ EFFORT _____	WED SWIM CSS 1200m CSS WU 4×50m easy, 20 sec rest. Drills 4×25m. Main 2×400m at CSS +5 (45 sec rest), then 4×25m fast (30 sec rest). CD 2×50m easy. DONE ☐ EFFORT _____	THU RUN THRESHOLD INTERVALS 40 min Z5 10 min Z2 + 4 strides. 3×6 min Z4–Z5a, 2 min easy jog between. 8 min easy. DONE ☐ EFFORT _____	FRI SWIM RACE DISTANCE 1150m RACE EFFORT Open water if possible. WU 4×50m easy. 750m continuous at race effort. CD 4×50m easy. DONE ☐ EFFORT _____	SAT RUN LONG RUN 45 min Z2 Easy Z2. Relaxed, the day before the longest brick so far. DONE ☐ EFFORT _____	SUN BRICK BRICK 60 + 15 min Z2 Steady Z2 ride. Run 15 min easy Z2 off the bike. Wear race kit and practise race nutrition on the bike. DONE ☐ EFFORT _____
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COACH TIP Volume drops, intensity stays. Race-effort work moves to Tuesday's ride and Thursday's run. Sunday's 20-minute brick run is the longest in the plan, and it's all easy.

MON

REST

REST DAY

—

No session.
Sleep, stretch,
and let the week
before land.

DONE ☐ EFFORT ☐

TUE

BIKE

RACE-EFFORT
OPENERS

40 min Z4

15 min easy. 3×4
min race effort
(Z3–Z4), 3 min
easy between.
Easy to finish.

DONE ☐ EFFORT ☐

WED

SWIM

CSS

1000m CSS

WU 4×50m easy,
20 sec rest.
Drills 4×25m.
Main 5×100m
at CSS, 20
sec rest. CD
4×50m easy.

DONE ☐ EFFORT ☐

THU

RUN

RACE-EFFORT RUN

30 min Z4

10 min Z2.
2×5 min race
effort (Z3–Z4),
2 min easy
jog between.
8 min easy.

DONE ☐ EFFORT ☐

FRI

SWIM

OPEN WATER

25–30 min
RACE EFFORT

Open water if
available: 600m
continuous
at race effort,
then easy. Pool:
700m easy with
4×25m fast.

DONE ☐ EFFORT ☐

SAT

RUN

LONG RUN (EASY)

35 min Z2

Easy Z2. Shorter
than Build
on purpose.

DONE ☐ EFFORT ☐

SUN

BRICK

LONGEST BRICK

45 + 20 min Z2

Steady Z2 ride,
then 20 min
easy Z2 run.
Longest brick
run of the plan.

DONE ☐ EFFORT ☐

COACH TIP Taper. Don't add anything. Ride and run the race course if you can get to it, note the turns and the surface, and keep both easy. Saturday is a full rest day.

MON REST REST DAY — No session. Sleep, stretch, and let the week before land. DONE ☐ EFFORT _____	TUE BIKE SHARPEN 35 min Z4 15 min easy. 3×3 min race effort, 2 min easy between. 7 min easy. Last real effort of the plan. DONE ☐ EFFORT _____	WED RUN SHARPEN + SWIM 25 min Z4 RUN — 10 min easy. 3×2 min race effort, 2 min jog between. 5 min easy. / SWIM 700m — later in the day, or straight after the run: WU 6×50m easy (20 sec rest), 4×50m race effort (30 sec rest), CD 4×50m easy. DONE ☐ EFFORT _____	THU RUN COURSE PREVIEW 20 min Z2 Easy Z2, on the race run course if you can get to it. Note the turns, the surface, and where the hills are. No efforts. DONE ☐ EFFORT _____	FRI BIKE COURSE PREVIEW 30 min Z1 Easy spin on the race bike course if possible. Check the corners, the surface, and where you can carry speed. Ride the race bike and check everything works. DONE ☐ EFFORT _____	SAT REST FULL REST — Pack and lay out your race gear. Nothing else. DONE ☐ EFFORT _____	SUN RACE RACE DAY 750m / 20km / 5km RACE EFFORT Sprint triathlon. Even splits: hold back on the bike, and run the second half of the 5km as fast as the first. Good luck. DONE ☐ EFFORT _____
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