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Beginner Triathlete–Novice Ironman—Don't Expect Bike Magic

By Ray Fauteux

In preparing to take on the challenge of a first Ironman, I believe far too many athletes put too much emphasis on the bike they choose to purchase for the event.

Somewhere along the Ironman trail, many athletes have come to believe that the lighter, and more state of the art the bike, the faster they will finish the bike leg of the Ironman.

Nothing could be further from the truth. For example: You could put one athlete on a \$10,000 bike and have him train without the aid of a proper diet or without paying attention to proper hydration choices and replacement drinks and the Ironman will spit him out like a cherry pit somewhere around mile 80 on the bike course.

Take another athlete and put him on a \$800 reliable, average weight, used bike fitted with proper pedals and aero bars. Then have him pay particular attention all training year to proper diet, hydration, and raceday fueling techniques and somewhere around mile 80 of the same course he will call out "nice bike" as he passes athlete number one who is in for a very long, painful day.

Don't get all wrapped up in taking out a second mortgage so you can buy that "special" bike that is 6 ounces lighter than anything on the road. After all, you're going to be loading 5 pounds of water and food and gear on the thing before you even get out of transition. This is not your normal bike race. If you were just racing a bike century and that's it, then that might be a different story. But that's not the nature of this beast.

First of all you've most likely been bashed around for an hour or so in a wild free–for–all swim and for most of that time your heart–rate has been racing out of control. Plus, you still have a full marathon to consider after you get off the bike.

Your bike is just a small part of the Ironman equation. Don't get too wrapped up in light and fancy and expensive. I know, I've done that.

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I had my best bike leg ever and my first thought was to fix up the old bike and keep racing it. However, I let my bike supplier talk me into buying a fancier, newer model that was so much lighter that I would go even faster. I never, never matched my fastest bike ride over the next 10 years. Even on bikes valued 10 times more than my old standby. It was probably the biggest single mistake I made in my 20 year Ironman career. I should have gone with my very first instinct.

For some reason, a bike will just suit you. It suits your style, ability and "fits" you like that favorite pair of runners. When this happens, hang on to that bike. If you have to, save it mainly for races and get a second bike for the bulk of your training. That way your race–day bike will last you for years.

I've raced on more than one high–end bike that I was just never comfortable on, no matter how light and fast they were supposed to be. At first it may seem cool to be the recipient of envious gazes from fellow triathletes when they see you on your bike the week leading up to the race. You are the bike "king".

Believe me, its not so cool when these same athletes pass you out on the course with those dreaded words left in their wake. "Nice bike."

Every time you hear that, you will want to sink further and further into your bike seat. You will wish you were on a \$250 beater. At least that way you reason, you would have an excuse for getting passed over and over again. There is nowhere to hide out there.

To save yourself a ton of embarrassment and humiliation, be sure that your ability matches the bike you ride.

All my bikes are gone now, except for one. That same old bike is in my living room on a wind–trainer and if I decide to do this amazing race once again, when I turn 60, four years from now—it will be on a very special, 16 year old bike.

My name is Ray and I'm a veteran of over 25 years of endurance events including 14 Ironman Triathlons. I've built a site full of training and racing tips for the beginner triathlete/novice–ironman. come for a visit...

<http://triathlon-ironman-myfirstironman-ironstruck.com>

Ironman Langkawi–Malaysia–About The Race.

By Ray Fauteux

Ironman Langkawi–Malaysia is soon to take place in the idealic setting of Kuah town. The race is to go ahead as scheduled on February 26, 2006 and there are still openings for those of you looking for a race in the very near future.

The langkawi–Malaysia Ironman first took place in the year 2000 and has since become the favorite of

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many athletes from around the world.

The swim is a 3.8 km swim in the tranquil waters of the Kuah town Jetty.

The bike is a 2 and one half loop course that takes place on the coastal roads of Langkawi island. The course itself is hilly and undulating

The marathon consists of two 21.1 km. loops on a course that is generally flat but with gradual climbs at the 4–10 and 24–30 km. marks.

>From all reports Ironman Langkawi–Malaysia is well organized and supported with great enthusiasm by the local population.

One thing to be aware of and possibly train for is the heat which can be anywhere from 28–35 degrees C. Also, it is a very humid heat and reminds me quite a lot of what one might experience in the Hawaii Ironman in Kona.

Pros will be competing for prize money and age groupers will have the opportunity to qualify for the world championships in Hawaii as there will be spots available for age group qualifiers.

Accommodation prices look very reasonable. Several of the major hotels in Langkawi are just minutes from the race start. However, expect to pay quite a lot for the return flight from North America with gateways from Los Angeles and New York. There is no ferry necessary from the mainland to Langkawi island as they now have their own international airport.

This seems to be a terrific holiday destination for those looking for a more "exotic" Ironman venue and comes highly recommended by those who have competed there in the past. Athletes from 17 countries are expected for the 2006 edition of this Ironman.

For those looking for a last minute race, it appears that entries will be available until mid–February. If not this year, then possibly it might be an ideal race to consider for 2007. Take the whole family and make a holiday of this beautiful Ironman destination. What an opportunity to visit the "other" side of the world.

Any information you might need can be found on their

website@LangkawiIronman.com

My name is Ray and I'm a Canadian with a 25 year career in endurance events including 14 Ironman triathlons. I've built a site called "Ironstruck" for the beginner triathlete and the novice ironman.

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