

JUST DU IT

Add variety to your training and give your running a boost with duathlon.



Chula Vista Challenge

DO YOU FIND YOURSELF STRUGGLING through the swim, gaining ground on the bike and passing your competitors on the run? Do you enjoy running but have room for improvement? Duathlon's run-bike-run format offers a great way to mix up your season, improve your run fitness and possibly even earn a Team USA slot.

Because of the extra running emphasis, duathlon training is an excellent way to gain run strength. "The ability to train for the run more effectively and to race in a multisport setting is really helpful for triathletes," says coach Jason Digman, owner of Dig It Triathlon and Multisport in

Plymouth, Minn. "It's also a great option in parts of the U.S. where water access is limited." Big fitness gains can be had from extending one's season with spring or fall duathlons.

Kirsten Saas, USAT's 2013 Age-Group Triathlete of the Year, as well as the female winner of the 2014 USAT Duathlon National Championships in St. Paul, Minn., enjoys the benefits of competing in both sports. "It's easy to get into a rut and do the same workouts time and again," she says. "Even just adding a run before the bike feels different than a straight [bike-run] brick."

In addition to various brick workouts, Digman recommends

TYPICAL DISTANCES

Domestic duathlons vary from a "sprint" 2.5K run, 17K bike, 2.5K run, a "short" course of 5K, 30K, 5K to an "intermediate" course with runs of up to 12K. "Long" and "ultra" distance events, such as the popular Powerman series, will test the legs of even the fittest athletes.

UPCOMING RACES

June 6 to Sept. 13

Go Fast Multisport FIT Family Series, Northern Ohio, various venues, Hfpracing.com

July 11

Faith in Action Caregivers Duathlon, Wheeling, W.V., Faithinactionwheeling.org

July 11

DQ Duathlon at Vincetown, Vincetown, N.J., Dqtridu.com

July 18

Tri the Parks Duathlon, Appling, Ga., Tribluesky.com

July 18-19

Chula Vista Challenge, Chula Vista, Calif., Chulavistachallenge.com

July 25

Shoreman 1/2 Distance Duathlon, Egg Harbor City, N.J., Dqevents.com

repeats: After a warm-up, perform three sets of a 1-mile run, 10-minute bike, with no recovery in between. "These are a great way to get the legs and the mind used to what duathlon is all about," he says.

On race day, expect small fields and a low-key atmosphere. Local races may attract 100 or fewer competitors. The 2014 Duathlon National Championships drew more than 600 competitors. (By comparison, the Olympic-distance USAT National Championships had a field of 3,100.) The top 18 finishers in each age group, rolling down to 25th place, qualify for Team USA. (The qualifying window is closed for the 2015 ITU Duathlon World Championship, to be held Oct. 14-18 in Adelaide, Australia, but visit Usatriathlon.org for details on qualifying for 2016.)

Whether you decide to "du" a duathlon for fun or to punch your ticket to worlds, heed the advice of many who have bonked before: Don't go out too hard. "Even splits are the fastest way to finish," Digman says. "Remember: The race does not end at T1." — HEATHER JOHNSON

NEWBIE TIP

PACK ELECTRICAL TAPE. Whether it's to put your number on your bike, attach salt tabs or nutrition to the top tube or to redo loose handlebar tape, a roll of black electrical tape could come in handy on race day. Leave a roll in your transition bag for just-in-case scenarios.