

THE EASY STEP UP FROM SHORT DISTANCE TRIATHLON TO THE ROCKMAN OFF-ROAD TRI

By Glen Gore, Ex Professional Triathlete/Current Professional Coach and Editor of Triathlon Plus SA Magazine

Okay, so you have done a few triathlons before but mainly over the sprint distance. Perhaps you're still keen to try a longer distance triathlon and not too sure of how to go about training for it?

Have you ever considered stepping up the distance and doing the Rockman Triathlon? No, I don't mean some crazy 226km race called the Ironman either. The Rockman Triathlon is an event held over a 2km swim, 70km mountain bike and 16km trail run.

I have an easy-to-do program designed to step up your fitness from short distance to ultra distance without spending hours and hours training. We will have some "key" sessions that are crucial to success but generally, the training program is manageable and certainly within reach of the vast majority of you.

Follow my basic guideline over the course of the next few weeks and you will soon see that to finish the Rockman triathlon is actually pretty "easy" and no sweat at all (okay...maybe just a little sweat).

Week 1 - Week 4

Mon: Rest day (all 4 weeks, use Monday as your recovery day)

Tue: am: Cycle Session:

Week 1 – 30km spin easy
Week 2 – 40km spin easy
Week 3 – 50km spin easy
Week 4 – 40km spin

pm: Run Session:

Week 1 – Week 4:

Time trial session (1km warm-up with stretch followed by an 8km time trial done at tempo pace (hard but you can still afford to chat, 1km cool down) Total = 10km.

Do this over a period of 4 weeks and try to improve your time during that course. Always use the same marked and measured course. Try to keep it relatively flat

Wed: am: Swim Session:

Week 1 – Week 4:

Warm-up 200m swim, 200m kick, 200m pull

10 x 100m rest 30 secs pace is easy (as you get fitter over the course of the 4 weeks, reduce the amount of rest and increase the amount of effort per each 100m)

16 x 25m sprints (on 45 secs) reduce rest time by 5 secs each week

400m easy recover

Total = 2.4km

Those doing the paddle event will do the same amount of biking and running but will substitute the swim sessions set out in this program, for paddles sessions instead!

pm: Run Session:

Week 1 – 8km easy
Week 2 – 12km easy
Week 3 – 14km easy
Week 4 – 16km easy

These run sessions are to be used purely for recovery purposes especially after having done the hard time trial session the night before.

Thu: am: Cycle Session:

Week 1 – Week 4:

We will use this once weekly session for speed work. Warm-up 15km. Nice and easy with lots of spin. We then work on time rather than distance. Start with 30 minutes comprising 5 minutes at race pace followed by 5 minutes recovery spin time. What you will now do is increase the amount of time spent on the speed work by 10 minutes per each week (i.e. 4th week = 60 minutes). As you get fitter, you will also increase the race pace effort and reduce the recovery time. Cool down after this effort with another 10km spin session. In total you should average anywhere between 40km (week 1) and 55km (week 4)

pm: rest

Fri: am: Run Session:

Week 1 – Week 4:

We will use the Friday morning as our weekly long run. We will start with 12km in the first week and then gradually increase the distance by 3km each week to eventually end on 21km for week 4. The pace is moderate, not too hard.

pm: Swim Session:

This session will be nice and easy. After a long run in the morning you need some time to let the legs recover. 100m swim, 50m kick, 100m pull buoys (rest 20 secs only after all 3 of these). Complete this set of 250m 5 times in Week 1, going up to 10 times in Week 4.

Total = Anywhere from 1.2km – 2km

Sat: am: Brick Session

This is one of the key sessions you need to follow each week to ensure a successful race in March. We will start off with some moderate distance and then slowly increase that over the period of 4 weeks.

Week 1 = Cycle 40km and then follow that with a 5km

Week 2 = Cycle 50km with an 8km run directly after

Week 3 = Cycle 60km (race distance) and run 10km slowly after

Week 4 = Cycle 80km and run 15km after finishing the bike ride

You can use these sessions to simulate race conditions. You can also experiment and use different forms of nutrition so you get it spot on come race day. You need not go too hard during these sessions, as it's more a case of getting used to cycling a long way and then running directly after. Another key point to remember is that the run route at the ROCKMAN Triathlon is on dirt, so you may want to choose some running routes that encompass trail running.

The bike sessions can also be done either on the road or on the mountain bike. If you do opt for the mountain bike, work on time rather than distance, as a mountain bike riding is considerably more time consuming than riding on the road.

Sun: Open water swim

This would be a great day to do some open water swimming if possible. It is a little different to swimming in a pool, so best you get used to it long before race day. You'll need to practice drills such as lifting your head to find markers, swimming in a wetsuit and so on. Some people are also a little intimidated by open water and can often overcome their fears by doing some practice drills and sessions in a safe environment. We can work on time by starting with a short 20 minutes and eventually progressing to a maximum of 50 minutes after week 4. This should be more than sufficient in terms of mileage to give you the arms and fitness to complete 1.8km of swimming

I have outlined a basic weekly schedule that you can follow over the course of the next 4 weeks. This should be enough to get you across that finish line of your very first ultra triathlon. If this program is still too hard and you're not quite ready to jump up to this distance, then use the 10% rule. Reduce the volume by 10% for each session you battle with and increase your rest periods. As you get fitter and more accustomed to the training routine, you increase the volume as per program and slot into the normal rest periods. The same rule to stepping up your game will apply when this 4-week cycle ends. You can use the same program structure but increase the training volumes by 10% and reduce your rest periods as you get fitter. Consistency is the key here. If you can put together at least 4 weeks of uninterrupted training based on this program then I guarantee you that you will finish the Rockman Triathlon.

Email me on glen@triathlonplussa.co.za personally if you have problems understanding the program and I will gladly get you on your way.