

PREPPING FOR THE DURBAN 70.3 SURF SWIM IN A POOL

Okay for those poor Jozi bru's and others that are nowhere near the ocean, this swim program below is for you. Even those that hail from PE, EL and CT might also learn a trick or two by doing this prep plan swim program that may make for a better swim at 70.3.

On most days, the surf is great down here and 99% of the swim field will have no problem with the 1.9km surf swim on the 19th June. However, on the other days, the Snake Park beach can be pretty ruthless, especially if you are under prepared. Comparing the surf break in Durban to that of East London's Orient Beach and Port Elizabeth's Hobie Beach is like comparing chalk and cheese. The strong swimmers will have no problem and they should sail past the break, out to the backline, easily navigate the long stretch northwards and then catch a few dumpers on the way in back to shore. The majority of swimmers however are moderate to weak swimmers and those are the ones that if they have not swum in these types of conditions before, might battle somewhat on race day.

Our bit of advice - if you are unsure and intimidated by the thought of swimming in the surf down in Durban for the Ironman 70.3, best you come down to the sea for a recce swim before race day and make sure you are mentally ready for the challenge.

For those that cannot make it to Durban for a swim, your best bet is the following pool session to prepare yourselves for swimming with currents and ducking under waves on the way out and same on the way back in. The long stretch between the 2 turn buoys is the easy part.

- Make sure you are 10% fitter for swimming than you are right now. The surf swim in Durban saps the energy from the start gun. The first 250-300m of the swim is the toughest part. Many a swimmer have come down for a one-on-one swim with me only to realise in 5 minutes, that they are not as fit as they thought they were.
- You are fighting currents and ducking under waves which require holding your breathe. You then need to surface again and swim hard to get to the backline and the 1st turn buoy. This is physically draining and a lot tougher than any dam swim you have done before or the casual laps you do at the Virgin Active.
- Get yourself a new pair of goggles and bring a spare cap to wear along with the race cap that is given. The waves will knock off your goggles in 2 seconds if they are not secured. A new set of goggles are also less likely to leak in the rough surf and the vision is better. When you swim in the sea, you need to see exactly where you need to go and what is coming your way in terms of waves.
- The water temp in June is 20 degrees which is actually quite warm so if you hate wearing a wetsuit and it feels like it's smothering you, don't wear one. For those that do wear wetsuits, remember some extra lube on the neck and other areas. The salt water tends to chafe a lot worse down at the coast. On race day, make sure you don't put the wetsuit on too early (only 30 minutes before you start) You will start to dehydrate if you stand in a suit for too long before you go off at race start. A bottle of water kept by your side comes in handy, to keep you hydrated while you stand on the beach and watch the sports and antics of those competitors racing into the surf before you

Pool Session Specific to Swimming the 70.3 in Durban:

- Start with a 300m flat-out swim (no warm-up). This will prep you for the reality of starting cold, starting fast and getting your heart rate from under 100 to well over 150+- in 20 seconds. You can increase this distance to 400m once you are fitter

- Next up 200m kick with fins - butterfly kick or freestyle. Butterfly is best as this kick will be used with great effect to help you navigate under the waves when you duck for them going out to the 1st buoy marker. Kick moderate to hard effort on this one. Strong legs are like a boat engine, use them for the first 250/300m then you rest them....

Next

- 8 x 50m swim as follows (12.5m hard swim/12.5m underwater hold your breath/touch the wall and return the same, 12.5m hard swim/12.5m under water) the rest period is between 20 and 30 seconds after each 50m repeat. This segment will be tough as you are not used to holding your breathe for so long during the 50m repeats but it gets easier and will certainly help you in the sea and ducking under waves

Then

- 200m pull-buoys slow recovery swim before the next sprint stuff starts
- 8 x 25m sprints – rest 30 seconds at each wall as follows
- 5 strokes normal swim/2 strokes lift the head to sight/5 strokes normal swim/2 strokes lift the head. Do this for each of the 25m repeats. This helps your sighting skills as you need to keep the momentum of swimming forwards going without stopping and looking up to see where you are going. Your neck takes a little strain if you are not used to it, so practice this in advance before you come down

Then

- 200m swim with fins easy recovery

Then

- 4 x 25m rest 15 secs as follows
- 1st 25m underwater – or as far as you can swim underwater
- 2nd 25m sprint hard but don't breathe until the other side if you can, or at least as far as you can
- 3rd 25m is a normal sprint swim – normal breathing
- 4th sprint is underwater again (this type of hypoxic training will help prep you for the swim no doubts)
- 400m easy swim recovery
- 100m maximum sprint effort swim
- 200m easy swim recovery and out

Total Swim: 2.3km