

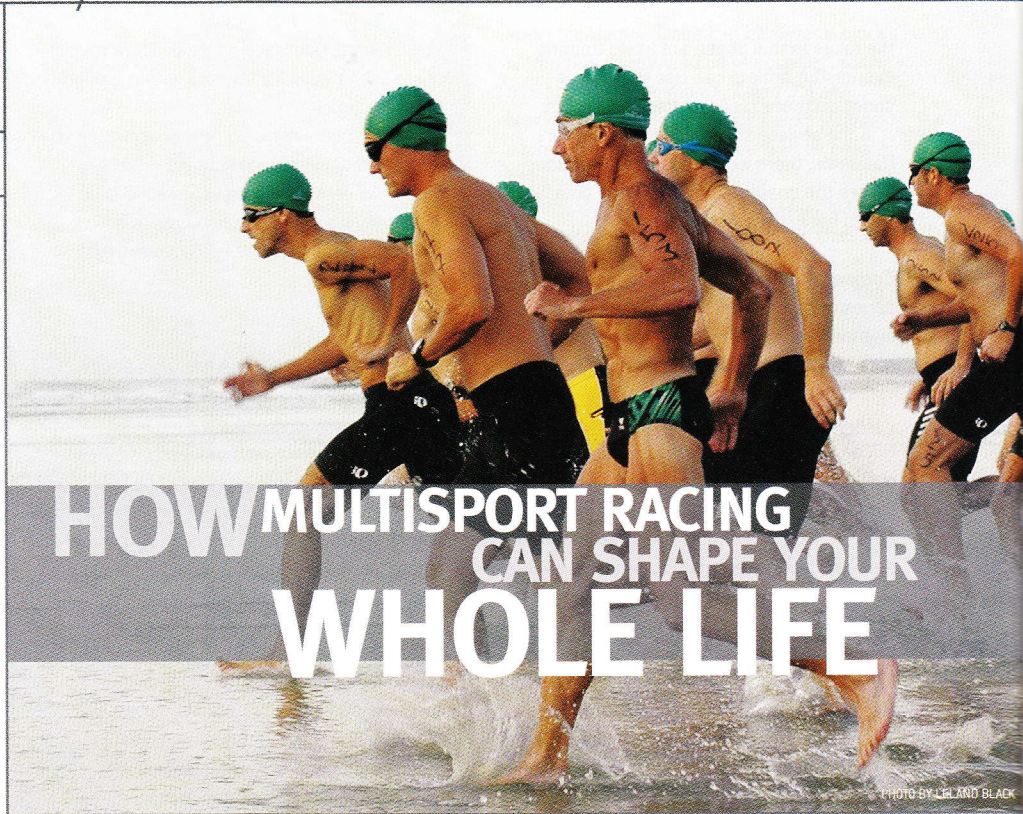
● *By Dr. Steve Jonas*

For many of us, multisport racing does shape our whole lives. If it does, or perhaps is going to, whether we are just getting into the sport or have been in it for quite some time, we want that influence to be a positive one. As we go into the new season, let's look at what the positive influences can be, then at the negative potential, and then consider how to go about making sure that we follow the first, not the second, option.

First, as to physical conditioning, by the act of being a multisport athlete you are engaging in cross-training, bringing balance into your exercise program. Second, in my experience, regular multisport athletes are generally happy people. Whether they are happy because they are multisport athletes and are multisport athletes because they are happy is a question for another time. But we know what having a happy outlook on life does for one overall in one's life. Third, if your life-partner, parent, or child, or very close friend, is also a multisport athlete, you will definitely have a racing partner and you may have a training partner too. Finally, multisport racing can provide a year-round framework for your life, a schedule to structure other parts of your life around in a positive way, and, if you are so inclined, a focus for traveling.

OK, so how about the negatives? It happens that each one of the above has a flip side. Any training program can be overdone. Second, if you don't go about being a multisport athlete in a way that works for you, not anyone else (see below for some thoughts on how to do the former), instead of making you happy, it can make you very unhappy. Third, if you are the only person in your family and circle of friends who does this, if you don't adapt and adjust how you do your training and racing to that reality, big problems can arise. Finally, as in "third," if you don't make sure to balance your athletics with all of the other parts of your life, work, other leisure-time activities, in other words run your training and racing rather than letting them run you, you are asking for trouble.

So, just how do you go about having multisport racing shape your whole life, as well as helping you to get into shape, without turning your life upside down? First (and



regular readers of mine will be familiar with this formula), whether you are just starting out or have been in the sport for a long time, take a look at where you are now. Assess yourself. What do you like about what you are doing? Stayed in shape, had fun at the races, had finishes that you could reasonably expect to achieve? What don't you like? Too much? Too little? Too slow, but not enough time or skill or genetic endowment to go faster? Too many races? Too few? Was last season fun or not fun or some of both?

Taking these and other considerations into account, stop right now and define success, for yourself. For this to be helpful, it has got to be done with a strong dose of realism. If success is defined for you as finishing well up in your age-group and that is not happening, if getting there is simply not realistic in terms of who you athletically and how much time you have without turning the rest of your life totally upside down, staying with that definition of success can lead to most of the negatives described above.

Next you are ready to set your goals for the season, in line with your assessment and definition of success. Using myself as an example, 2007 will mark my 25th season in the sport. I will start it having done over 175 multisport races including over 110 triathlons. I have been slow from the start, really slow. So I have never defined success in terms of going fast or "winning." As I have

gotten older, I have come home with lots of plaques in local races, but for the most part (I very occasionally finish ahead of someone) that is only because in my region my age-cohort has been steadily shrinking since I turned 60 --- I'm 70 this year --- and when there are three or fewer in my age-group, I get one. But it's always been the icing on the cake, not the cake. The cake for me has always been having fun in the race and finishing happily and healthily, even when I come in last overall, something that has happened at more than one event.

The final step in achieving happiness in multisport racing is taking some time to establish priorities between your racing and everything else that is going on in your life. Easy to do? Sometimes not. But if a major part of the rest of your life is going to pot, maybe this season you should concentrate on going out and having fun, perhaps in fewer races, perhaps on less training, perhaps in shorter races, rather than spending an extra five hours a week on speed work and doing five extra races because you think that doing so will get you onto the podium, when even if it would (and often it won't) your wife and kids are becoming strangers.

Multisport racing can shape your whole life. By following the simple guidelines above, you can make sure that it does so in a positive, not a negative, way. Have a great season, everyone! See you at the races!



*Dr. Steve Jonas is the author of *Triathloning for Ordinary Mortals*™, currently in its 20th year of publication (the 2nd ed. publication date is July 16, 2006), and a professor of preventive medicine at Stony Brook University (NY).*