

A LATE-SEASON WHERE AM I?



● By Dr. Steve Jonas

You are coming to the end of your first or perhaps second season of multi-sport racing. You are having a great time, enjoying triathloning or duathloning or both. You are already looking forward to next year. Or perhaps you have tried a few races and are not sure of your place in the sport or that the sport has a place for you. In either case, I suggest thinking about: Where am I? What am I getting out of the sport? What, perhaps, am I not getting out of it that I thought I might? How should I wrap up this season?

Whether you are gung ho for next year or perhaps a doubting Thomas or Thomasina, I suggest that first and foremost you take a look back at the goals you set for yourself before you did your very first race. Did you come into multi-sport racing from a non-racing background out of curiosity, and your goal was simply to satisfy it? Did you come into the sport from another racing sport in which you did well in terms of speed, looking to do well in this one also? Did you look at doing the sport as an opportunity to get into cross-training on a regular basis with the primary goal of improving your health and physical fitness, using racing as a motivator? Did you know something about the sport from a friend or two before starting and say to yourself, "this looks like a good way to have fun?"

My bet is that whether your goal was one on the above list or one of the many others that folks come into the sport with, if you are feeling good, feeling good about yourself, and feeling good about the sport, you chose an appropriate goal (or goals) for you, and have achieved it (them), in one way or another. I would also bet that if the opposite is true, the goal you chose was inappropriate for you, in terms of, for example, skill-level, available time, and the rest of your life. In either case, now is the time to take a look at your goals, and in the light of doing so re-evaluate: what is it that I am doing that helps me to achieve them? Or what is it about them that contributes to my feeling not as good about what I am doing as I would like to. In ten words, do my goals work for me, why and why not?

Goal elements to consider? For example, have I chosen the right multi-sport for me? If you really don't like to swim and you have chosen triathlon for the "challenge" and are not having fun, time to re-consider. Triathlon is not the be-all and end-all of multi-sport racing. There are duathletes who never touch the water and have a great, long, fun career in the two-sport variety. Duathlons pop up with more frequency in the fall, so now would be a good time to check one out. If you are having trouble swimming but do want to stay in triathlon, now would be a

good time to check out a fall swim clinic. On the other hand, if you can swim but have chosen to start out in duathlon, perhaps look for a Sprint tri this fall, before the water gets too cold.

If you are not inherently fast (like me) and you have chosen to engage simply to have fun, and you are, you have achieved your goal. If you are so motivated, believe me you can have a great time in the sport without ever going fast. However, if you are not inherently fast but nevertheless have set as your goal going fast and are spending hours on speed work without getting anywhere, think again about why you are in the sport and perhaps change your focus to — that's right, simply having fun. To achieve the latter you need train a lot less and a lot less intensively (just like I do) than you need to achieve the former. On the other hand, if you are doing speed work and you are picking up the pace (the good news) but feel like it's something of a struggle (the bad news), take a look at your particular program and then look at some others, either in print or at a fall clinic. There are many of both to choose from out there. Consider too engaging a personal coach.

And so, as the season comes to an end, take a deep breath, literally and figuratively. Life is long and so can your stay in the sport be. The key to doing that is to make sure that you set goals that work for you and work for you now. Remember, as your life circumstances and your athletic abilities change, you can always change your goals and continue to stay in the sport. Then you can always look forward happily to that next race and that next season, just like I do, 24 years and 170-plus races into it.



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