



QUALIFY *for* KONA

Dream of toeing the line on the Big Island? Your road map begins here. **By Lance Watson**

for a triathlete, completing an Ironman is the challenge to top all challenges. Your first Ironman is a feat in uncharted territory: It's one big adventure that you strive to complete to the best of your ability. Several days or weeks later, after a chance to reflect on your maiden Ironman, you may start to wonder: Can I go faster? How fast can I go? Can I qualify for the big show?

The competition to get to Kona has never been steeper, but a targeted program can make all the difference. Ironman is one sport that rewards solid work ethic over natural talent. You *can* qualify!

About the plan

This program is for athletes who are targeting a full Ironman to qualify for the Hawaii Ironman.

It should be noted that evolving an athlete to the highest level is a slightly longer path than just this final seven weeks of training. This training program is an example of the kind of work you have to do to take your goals to the next level.

This training plan combines pace and heart rate targets. Key Ironman workouts are structured around a qualifying time pace for the discipline (once you select your goal Ironman event, find the race splits of the most recent age-group winners). Other sessions will be heart rate-oriented, so you can let your heart rate dictate the pace for the day rather than trying to push for pace or time.

This particular plan is designed primarily for experienced triathletes between the ages of 25 and 55. Outside of this age bracket, training emphasis should be shifted to less overall volume and more recovery time. In the case of younger athletes, lower volume should be coupled with higher intensity.

As for ability, currently, your race performance and fitness should indicate that you are capable of finishing within an hour of the goal qualifying finish time. This would be on a steady day, not on an exceptional or "magical" day!

You should be healthy and willing to commit a fair bit of time and energy to prioritize your training. You must have had at least 16 weeks of consistent training under your belt. Over the past 12 weeks, you should have a minimum of four long runs of more than two hours (including one at 2.5–3 hours), and 4–5 long rides of more than 4.5 hours, including two at more than five hours. It is preferable that you have raced a minimum of once or twice during this period over an Olympic-distance or half-Ironman, and generally have a high level of triathlon fitness.

Qualifying for Kona is a big goal. Con-

sider getting an experienced coach with a track record of excellence to help personalize and refine your individual program. Like an Olympian or professional athlete, it takes a deeper look at the finer details of your training environment, skills and goals to maximize your potential.

Swim abbreviations and notes

This program emphasizes six kinds of swims:

» **Pace work:** This swim focuses primarily on achieving your goal race pace. This is a great set for learning even pacing.

» **Build threshold:** Swimming done at faster than goal pace, but slower than sprinting.

» **DPS:** "Distance per stroke," reducing the number of strokes per pool length (and your stroke count) means you are pulling more water and gliding more efficiently. This session is combined with an increased emphasis on drills. Stroke length is a key part of the formula for faster swimming.

» **Aerobic power:** Sustained sets of aerobic swimming, which build endurance at a moderate level of intensity while maintaining good form.

» **Strength:** Includes pull buoy (P) and pull with paddles (PPd) swimming to build strength.

» **TT:** Time trials to build fitness, learn pacing and gauge progress.

SHARE YOUR TRAINING WITH ME: Cut out this plan, tack it to the fridge, and check off your sessions as you complete them. Share your experience by e-mailing me at watsonsworkouts@competitorgroup.com. If it's epic, inspirational or amusing, I might share your story with other readers of *Triathlete*!

HOW TO DETERMINE YOUR LACTATE THRESHOLD

Understanding lactate threshold (LT) training is critical to improvement. Your LT determines how long and how hard you can exert near-maximum effort. There's a point when the body begins to produce lactate at rates that are too fast for it to metabolize—this is the LT.

To determine your LT, do field tests

on the bike and the run on separate days, when your legs feel rested. After a warm-up of 15 minutes (run) to 30 minutes (bike), do a 30-minute time trial on flat terrain where you can hold your hardest uninterrupted effort for that duration (a bike trainer is ideal for the bike test and the track is a good option for the run).

Pace the time trial as evenly as possible. To determine your LT heart rate, hit the lap button on your heart rate monitor 10 minutes into the time trial. The average heart rate for the final 20 minutes is your LT heart rate.

This chart will help you understand the various zones.

| ZONE | % OF LACTATE THRESHOLD | BREATHING AND PERCEPTION |
|------|------------------------|--|
| 1 | <80% of LT | Gentle rhythmic breathing. Pace is easy and relaxed. The intensity is a jog or very easy run or very easy bike spin. |
| 2 | 80–87% of LT | Breathing rate and pace increase slightly. Slightly deeper breathing, although still comfortable. Running and cycling pace remains comfortable and conversation is possible. |
| 3 | 88–93% of LT | Breathing a little harder, pace is moderate. A stronger cycling or running rhythm, this is “feel good” fast. It is slightly more difficult to hold conversation. |
| 4 | 94–100% of LT | Starting to breathe very hard, pace is fast and beginning to get uncomfortable, approaching all-out 30-minute bike or run pace. This pace should be challenging to maintain. |
| 5 | >100% of LT | Breathing is deep and forceful. Pace is all-out sustainable for one to five minutes. Mental focus required, moderately uncomfortable and conversation undesirable. |

Coaching Abbreviations/Terminology

WU = warm-up | **MS** = main set | **CD** = cool-down | **X'** = X minutes, i.e. 3' | **X"** = X seconds, i.e. 30" | **Zn** = Zone (heart rate or perceived effort), i.e. Zn 1 = Zone 1 | **(parentheses)** = time indication for rest in between intervals or tasks, i.e. 4 x 3' (2') | **RPM** = Cadence (repetitions per minute) | **HR** = Heart rate | **P-ups** = pick-ups. Short accelerations at 75–85% of your maximum sprint speed | **Ftlk** = Fartlek running (continuous running with time indicated portions that are faster and also allocated jogging recovery sections) | **TT** = Time trial | **alt** = alternate | **PE** = Perceived exertion | **RP** = Race pace (goal race pace) | **Ppdl** = Pull with paddles | **P** = Pull buoy | **D** = Drills

WEEK 1

PLANNED TIME: **SWIM:** 5:00 **BIKE:** 13:30 **RUN:** 3:45 **TOTAL:** 22:15

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| MON | Day off: Walk and stretch. |
| TUE | SWIM: Aerobic power, 1:30. WU: 600–800 incl. drills and P-ups. MS: 10x300 (15"). Short rest, steady aerobic. RP +:03–:05/100. CD: 200–400 incl. free and non-free. RUN: Threshold maintenance, 45 min. WU: 10–15' of easy running and 4–5 x 20" P-ups. MS: Ftlk of 4–6 x 2' (1' jog). HR rises from Zn 3 to 4 through the set. CD: To 45'. BIKE: Recovery and technique, 1:00. WU: 10–15' easy. MS: 6–8 x 1' (1') high RPM (105+) and 5' single-leg drill alt left leg and right leg by 45". CD: To 1:00. |
| WED | KEY IRONMAN DAY BIKE: 2:00 WU: 30' easy. MS: 1:30 at Ironman RP. Quick transition. RUN: Aerobic base off the bike, 2:00, on terrain that simulates your Ironman course, at RP. Performance pointer: When you see “key day” in your week, make it your goal to put energy and attention into these sessions. A large part of Ironman success is sheer practice volume: mental toughness, nutrition, hydration and specificity to the course environment. Creating success in these workouts will ensure race success. |
| THU | BIKE: Aerobic base, 1:30. Flat to rolling. HR fluctuate Zn 1–3, mostly Zn 2. Include in your ride 3x10' (5") at 50–60 RPM in a hard gear to build strength. SWIM: DPS + technique, 1:00. WU: 300–400 incl. drills and P-ups. MS: 4x(4x50D, 200 DPS). 500 free easy, great technique. 10x50 kick (30") desc. 1–5. CD: 200–400 incl. free and non-free. |
| FRI | SWIM: Build threshold, 1:15. WU: 600–800 incl. drills and P-ups. MS: 10x100 (20") at RP –:02–:03/100. 200 easy. 10x50 (20") as 25 sprint, 25 easy. CD: 200–400 incl. free and non-free. Performance pointer: If you have a wetsuit-swim Ironman, you should swim open water in your wetsuit at least once a week in the final four weeks to adjust to the feel of the wetsuit and the rhythm of open-water swimming. You can wear your wetsuit in the pool. |
| SAT | BIKE: Strength and threshold, 3:00 WU: 30' Zn 1 rise to Zn 2. MS: 30' TT Zn 3–4, rolling terrain in TT position. 30' recovery. Hills 5x2' (2") Zn 4. CD: To 3:00. RUN: Recovery, 30' in Zn 1. SWIM: Strength, 1:15. WU: 600–800 incl. drills and P-ups. MS: 500 (20") 400 (20") as PPdl, 400–300–200–100–2 x 50 (all with 20") as P (no paddles). All steady aerobic at RP +:03–:05/100. CD: 200–400 incl. free and non-free. |
| SUN | KEY IRONMAN DAY BIKE: Aerobic endurance, 6:00, on terrain that simulates your Ironman course. Build by 2:00. The last 2:00 are at RP. Try not to stop except briefly to refill your bottles. Quick transition. RUN: Off the bike, 30', on terrain that simulates your Ironman course, at RP. Performance pointer: Your goal is to finish rides strong yet tired and not depleted. Eat often and regularly, especially early in the session when you aren't as hungry yet. Try setting your watch on countdown timer for 15- or 20-minute intervals and fuel with every chime. |

| WEEK 2 | | PLANNED TIME: SWIM: 5:00 BIKE: 13:00 RUN: 4:30 TOTAL: 22:30 | |
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| MON | Day off: Walk and stretch | | |
| TUE | SWIM: Aerobic power, 1:30. WU: 600-800 incl. drills and P-ups. MS: 8x400 (15"). Short rest, steady aerobic. RP +:03-:05/100. CD: 200-400 incl. free and non-free. RUN: Threshold maintenance, 45 min. WU: 10-15' of easy running and 4-5 x 20" P-ups. MS: Ftlk of 7-9 x 1:30' (1' jog). HR rises from Zn 3 to Zn 4 through the set. CD: To 45'. BIKE: Recovery and technique, 1:00. WU: 10-15' easy. MS: 7-9 x 1' (1') high RPM (105+) and 5' single-leg drill alt left leg and right leg by 45". CD: To 1:00. | | |
| WED | KEY IRONMAN DAY BIKE: 2:00. WU: 30' easy. MS: 1:30 at Ironman RP. Quick transition. RUN: Aerobic base off the bike, 2:30, on terrain that simulates your Ironman course, at RP. | | |
| THU | BIKE: Aerobic base, 1:30, on flat to rolling terrain. HR fluctuate Zn 1-3, mostly Zn 2. Include in your ride 4x7' (3.5') at 50-60 RPM in a hard gear to build strength. SWIM: DPS + technique, 1:00. WU: 300-400 incl. drills and P-ups. MS: 4x(100D, 2x100DPS). 600 free easy, great technique. 8x50 kick (30") desc. 1-4. CD: 200-400 incl. free and non-free. | | |
| FRI | SWIM: Build threshold, 1:15, 3000 total. WU: 600-800 incl. drills and P-ups. MS: 6x150 (25") at RP -:02-:03/100. 200 easy. 8x50 (20") as 25 sprint, 25 easy. CD: 200-400 incl. free and non-free. | | |
| | Performance pointer: Weekends have long sessions, so eat and sleep well on Friday and Saturday nights, and plan nutritious snacks. | | |
| SAT | BIKE: Strength and threshold, 3:00. WU: 30' Zn 1 rise to Zn 2. MS: 60' TT Zn 3-4, rolling terrain in TT position. 30' recovery. Hills 6x1:30' (2") Zn 4. CD: To 3:00. RUN: Recovery, Zn 1, 30'. SWIM: Strength, 1:15, 3500 total. WU: 600-800 incl. drills and P-ups. MS: 600PPdl (20"). 4x300P (20") (no paddles). All steady aerobic RP +:03-:05/100. CD: 200-400 incl. free and non-free. | | |
| SUN | KEY IRONMAN DAY BIKE: Aerobic endurance, 5:30, on terrain that simulates your Ironman course. Build speed 1-2 mph by 1:00-1:00-3:30. The last 3:30 is at RP. Try not to stop except briefly to refill your bottles. Quick transition. RUN: Off the bike, 45', on terrain that simulates your Ironman course, at goal RP. | | |
| | Performance pointer: Windy days offer a chance to practice patience and to focus on form and aero position on bike. | | |
| WEEK 3 | | PLANNED TIME: SWIM: 3:15 BIKE: 4:30 RUN: 2:20 TOTAL: 10:05 | |
| MON | Day off: Walk and stretch. Lower volume week. | | |
| TUE | SWIM: DPS + technique, 1:00. WU: 600-800 incl. drills and P-ups. MS: 4x(4x50DPS, 100 non-free, 4 x 50D). CD: 200-400 incl. free and non-free. | | |
| WED | BIKE: Aerobic base, 1:30, on flat to rolling terrain. HR fluctuate Zn 1-3, mostly Zn 2. | | |
| | Performance pointer: Recovery week is a good time to schedule massage and get in some extra stretching. | | |
| THU | SWIM: Threshold test, 1:15. WU: 800-1000 incl. drills and P-ups. MS: 800 TT. 200 easy. 200 TT. 200 easy. 100 TT. Report 100 splits and finishing HR for all TTs. CD: 400-600 incl. free and non-free. RUN: Threshold maintenance, 45'. WU: 10-15' of easy running and 4-5 x 20" P-ups. MS: Ftlk of 4-6 x 2' (1' jog). HR rises from Zn 3 to 4 through the set. CD: To 45'. | | |
| FRI | Day off: Walk and stretch | | |
| SAT | BIKE: Aerobic base, 3:00, on flat to rolling terrain. HR fluctuate Zn 1-3, mostly Zn 2. Quick transition. RUN: Off the bike for 20' on terrain that simulates your Ironman course, at RP. | | |
| SUN | SWIM: DPS + technique, 1:00 WU: 300-400 incl. drills. MS: 20x100 as 5x(100D, 2x100 DPS, 100 kick and 100 back). CD: 200-400 incl. free and non-free. RUN: 1:15, on terrain that simulates your Ironman course, at RP. | | |
| WEEK 4 | | PLANNED TIME: SWIM: 5:10 BIKE: 13:30 RUN: 4:50 TOTAL: 23:30 | |
| MON | Day off: Walk and stretch. | | |
| TUE | SWIM: Aerobic power, 1:40. WU: 600-800 incl. drills and P-ups. MS: 3800 straight. RP +:02-:03/100. CD: 200-400 incl. free and non-free. RUN: Threshold maintenance, 50'. WU: 10-15' of easy running and 4-5 x 20" P-ups. MS: Ftlk of 4-6 x 3' (1' jog). HR rises from Zn 3 to 4 through the set. CD: To 50'. BIKE: Recovery and technique, 1:00. WU: 10-15' easy. MS: 5-6 x 1:30 (45") high RPM (105+) and 5' single-leg drill alt left leg and right leg by 45". CD: To 60'. | | |
| WED | KEY IRONMAN DAY BIKE: 2:30. WU: 30' easy. MS: 2:00 at Ironman RP. Quick transition. RUN: Aerobic base, 3:00 off the bike, on terrain that simulates your Ironman course, at RP. | | |
| THU | BIKE: Aerobic base, 1:30, on flat to rolling terrain. HR fluctuates between Zn 1-3, mostly Zn 2. Include 6x5' (2.5') at 50-60 RPM in a hard gear to build strength. SWIM: Pace work, 1:00. WU: 300-400 incl. drills and P-ups. MS: 30x50 (20") at RP. CD: 200-400 incl. free and non-free. | | |
| FRI | SWIM: Build threshold, 1:15. WU: 800-1000 incl. drills and P-ups. MS: 5x200 (30 sec) at RP -:02-:03/100. 200 easy. 10x50 (20") as 25 sprint, 25 easy. CD: 200-400 incl. free and non-free. | | |
| SAT | KEY IRONMAN DAY BIKE: Aerobic endurance, 6:30, on terrain that simulates your Ironman course. Build speed 1-2 mph by 1:00-1:30-4:00. The last 4:00 is at RP. Try not to stop except briefly to refill your bottles. Quick transition. RUN: Off the bike, 30', on terrain that simulates your Ironman course, at RP. | | |
| | Performance pointer: Try out your race-day apparel in training at least once if you haven't had a chance to race in it. | | |
| SUN | SWIM: Strength, 1:15. WU: 800-1000 incl. drills and P-ups. MS: 30x50 (20") as 15PPdl, 15P (no paddles). All steady aerobic at goal RP +:03-:05/100. CD: 200-400 incl. free and non-free. RUN: Recovery, 30', Zn 1. BIKE: Aerobic base, 2:00, on flat to rolling terrain. HR fluctuate Zn 1-3, mostly Zn 2. | | |



WEEK 5 **PLANNED TIME: SWIM: 5:00 BIKE: 12:30 RUN: 3:30 TOTAL: 21:00**

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| MON | Day off: Walk and stretch. |
| TUE | SWIM: Aerobic power, 1:30. WU: 800-1000 incl. drills and P-ups. MS: 8x300 (30"). Steady aerobic. RP +:03-:05/100. CD: 200-400 incl. free and non-free. RUN: Threshold maintenance, 45'. WU: 10-15' of easy running and 4-5 x 20" P-ups. MS: Ftlk of 6-8 x 1:30 (1' jog). HR rises from Zn 3 to 4 through the set. CD: To 45'. BIKE: Recovery and technique, 1:00. WU: 10-15' easy. MS: 6-7 x 1:30 (45") high RPM (105+) and 5' single-leg drill alt left leg and right leg by 45". CD: To 1:00. |
| WED | KEY IRONMAN DAY BIKE: 2:30. WU: 30' easy. MS: 2:00 at RP. Quick transition. RUN: Off the bike aerobic base, 1:30, on terrain that simulates your Ironman course, at RP. Performance pointer: It's not uncommon for your energy to wax and wane during long bricks and during Ironman. Learn to be patient, and focus on maintaining run cadence (90-95 foot strikes per minute) and posture during a tough stretch. |
| THU | BIKE: Threshold, 1:30. WU: 30' incl. 5-6 x 20" P-ups. MS: 5x5' (4') HR rises from Zn 3 to 4 through the set. CD: To 1:30. SWIM: Pace work, 1:00. WU: 300-400 incl. drills and P-ups. MS: 15x100 (20") at RP. CD: 200-400 incl. free and non-free. |
| FRI | SWIM: Build threshold, 1:15. WU: 800-1000 incl. drills and P-ups. MS: 10x150 (30") at goal RP -:02-:03/100. 200 easy. 10 x 50 (20") as 25 sprint, 25 easy. CD: 200-400 incl. free and non-free. |
| SAT | BIKE: Strength and threshold, 3:00. WU: 30' Zn 1 rise to Zn 2. MS: 3x15' (5') Zn 4, rolling terrain in TT position. 30' recovery. Hills 8x1' (1') Zn 4-5. CD: To 3:00. Quick transition. RUN: Recovery, 30', Zn 1. SWIM: Strength, 1:15. WU: 800-1000 incl. drills and P-ups. MS: 500 (20") 400 (20") as PPdL, 400-300-200-100-2 x 50 (all with 20") as P (no paddles) at RP + :03-:05/100. CD: 200-400 incl. free and non-free. |
| SUN | KEY IRONMAN DAY. BIKE: Aerobic endurance, 4:30, on terrain that simulates your Ironman course. Build speed 1-2 mph by 1:00-1:30-2:00. The last 2:00 are at RP. Try not to stop except briefly to refill your bottles. Quick transition. RUN: Off the bike, 45', on terrain that simulates your Ironman course, at RP. |

WEEK 6 **PLANNED TIME: SWIM: 3:30 BIKE: 5:00 RUN: 2:30 TOTAL: 11:00**

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| MON | Day off: Walk and stretch. Start two-week taper—training volume gradually reduces. |
| TUE | SWIM: Pace work, 1:00. WU: 600-800 incl. drills and P-ups. MS: 6x50 (20") as 25 sprint, 25 easy. 6 x 200 (20") at RP. CD: 200-400 incl. free and non-free. |
| WED | BIKE: Threshold, 1:30. WU: 30' incl. 5-6 x 20" P-ups. MS: 5x5' (4') HR rises from Zn 4 to 5 through the set. CD: To 1:30. |
| THU | SWIM: Threshold, 1:15. WU: 600-800 incl. drills and P-ups. MS: 24x50 (10") short rest, best average for the set. CD: 200-400 incl. free and non-free. RUN: Threshold maintenance, 1:00. WU: 10-15' of easy running and 4-5 x 20" P-ups. MS: Ftlk of 3-4 x 6' (3' jog). HR rises from Zn 3 to 4 through the set. CD: To 60'. Performance pointer: Any time in training that you get to run on fresher legs, is a chance to gain power as a runner. Run with good form, strong posture and efficient turnover to reinforce and build run strength and prowess. |
| FRI | Day off: Walk and stretch. |
| SAT | RUN: Aerobic endurance, 1:00, as 20' Zn 1, the remaining time is Zn 2 to low Zn 3. BIKE: Aerobic base, 1:30, flat to rolling terrain. HR fluctuate Zn 1-3, mostly Zn 2. SWIM: Aerobic power, 1:15. WU: 600-800 incl. drills and P-ups. MS: 4-5 x 400 (20"). Short rest, steady aerobic. RP +:03-:05/100. CD: 200-400 incl. free and non-free. |
| SUN | KEY IRONMAN DAY BIKE: Aerobic endurance, 2:00, on terrain that simulates your Ironman course. Build speed 1-2 mph by 1:00 with the last 1:00 at RP. Try not to stop except briefly to refill your bottles. Quick transition. RUN: Off the bike, 30', on terrain that simulates your Ironman course, at RP. |

WEEK 7 **PLANNED TIME: SWIM: 1:30 BIKE: 2:20 RUN: 1:10 TOTAL: 5:00 + RACE**

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| MON | Day off: Walk and stretch. Continue two-week taper. |
| TUE | SWIM: Threshold maintenance, 45'. WU: 400-500 incl. drills and P-ups. MS: 6x100 (30") at RP. 100 easy. 10x50 (20") alt 50 fast, 50 easy. CD: 200-400 incl. free and non-free. |
| WED | BIKE: 1:20. Include 2x10' (10') at Ironman RP, HR Zn 3. Quick transition. RUN: Off the bike, 25'. 10' Zn 3. 15' Zn 1. |
| THU | SWIM: Aerobic power maintenance, 45'. WU: 400-500 incl. drills and P-ups. MS: 4x200 (20"). Short rest, steady aerobic. RP +:03-:05/100. CD: 200-400 incl. free and non-free. RUN: Threshold maintenance, 35'. Include 4-5 x 20" P-ups, with the middle 15' as Zn 3. BIKE: Optional recovery ride, 30', Zn 1. |
| FRI | Day off: Walk and stretch. Performance pointer: Remind yourself of the effort and focus that you are bringing into this race, and the awesome opportunity that you have created for yourself to succeed. Draw confidence from knowing that you have prepared to the best of your abilities. |
| SAT | BIKE: Race prep, 30'. Include 5-10' at RP. Test gears. Visualize. RUN: Race prep, 10'. Warm up and stretch. SWIM: Race prep, 10-15' on the course, include drills and 4-5 short P-ups. |
| SUN | Race Ironman! |



LifeSport head coach Lance Watson has coached a number of Olympians, Ironman and age-group champions. Visit Lifesportcoaching.com.