Keep It Simple: Chris McCormack
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I listened to a great podcast yesterday that left me smiling. I have always been very unorthodox in the way I have approached my training. As a sport Triathlon has an obsession with miles completed and hours done in training, and for many years I have often felt that the way we have built my skeleton of training and approached our consistent non periodised training structure has been shunned upon and judged by many of the self confessed expert coaches as "fluff." I don't know how many times I have been told by sport scientists that my training ideas and principles hold no water and that my success has only come about because of the simple fact that I am talented. It has always frustrated me, as we have always believed that it is actually the fact that most of the other coaches and to some degree many of the athletes are so self obsessed with numbers, whether they be power, miles completed, training cycles, periodised training structures etc, that they forget the entire purpose of training is to win the race or be your best on race day. This is so often overlooked, by many people, for a good -looking training plan that appears to have been thought out and structured. To be honest I see many of these training plans as fluff. I have a book coming out in May called "I'm Here to Win" available now on preorder at www.amazon.com (check it out here http://tinyurl.com/5v24grn) that really touches on our training principles, and when I wrote it I wanted to be as honest as possible about how we go about our planning, and the mindset behind racing to win in this sport.

When I listened to the podcast on http://www.imtalk.me with the controversial yet highly successful coach Brett Sutton, I just smiled and said "yes" finally a guy who sings the same tune as myself. I have known Brett Sutton my entire racing career. Strangely my mother knew Brett well before I

ever did a triathlon, as she was close friends to a family who was very close with Brett. I worked sparingly with Brett when he held the Australian National Coaching position but to be honest, my actual training time under Brett has been very small. He has been a coach I have delt with my entire career as I have continued to race many of his athletes from the early days until today. He is one coach I know who does know this sport and has seen it at the cold face for 2 decades. I respect his opinion as I have seen him at events all over the globe for my entire career and to be honest he has probably seen me race more events than any person I know during my entire career as I continued to have to fight many of his athletes. It is a great interview by one of the sports most controversial coaches and I will be honest and say I could not agree more with what he had to say here. Listen to part 1 of the interview here if your interested: http://tinyurl.com/23l6pgz

Triathlon is a sport, that is made up of three components, Swim, Bike and Run. It is getting the balance of these three components as close to an individuals 'perfection that is the key to the game. The finish time is what matters, not the performance in a single discipline within the sport. I understand it is cool to be first out of the water, or first off the bike, but really the key is to have the best overall time. No one cares who leads the medley relay swim after the breaststroke at the Olympics, so I have never been able to understand why people in our sport get so obsessed with breaking down this sport into three separate things. The winner crosses the line first and improving in this sport means reducing your overall finish time. This takes an approach that needs to be balanced and look at your entire spectrum of performance within the sport over the three disciplines. You do this together and not individually. It is not that hard when you keep it simple.

When I begin training for any distance in triathlon, the primary thing I am looking for is an ability to feel my way through the speed that I am focused on. I have never used a heart rate monitor and I never use power on the bike. I understand the science behind these tools and they are just that "tools", but I have always found that the key to incremental improvement in this sport is learning to trust your own pace and exertion across the three disciplines. If you ask me to go hard I know what hard is. Do I need to give you an exact number in power to justify that it was hard? No I don't. I can tell you by how it feels. What tends to happen with people who begin to become addicted to these gadgets and numbers is that they lose their ability to trust their own pace and perceived exertion and only trust what this "tool" tells them. As far as I am concerned this is a recipe for disaster. You lose your instinctive tunes that are your lifeline to racing. Training is about teaching yourself to understand your boundaries and then slowly pushing those boundaries up. You need to know how to feel those and where they are!

People get obsessed with numbers and more so coaches push their athletes down this path so as to allow them to justify in some way their knowledge as a coach. I am not here to criticise that approach nor to not acknowledge that training tools serve a purpose, but they should be left at home sometimes and athletic freedom should be given to each individual so as you can learn to trust who you are and the efforts you are putting out. Coaches like these tools as hey can go through the data and make suggestions as to what you need to change in training, BUT as an individual who is looking to improve trust me when I say, these gadgets can also be detrimental to you if you learn to rely on them too much. I say go out and try to get in touch with your perceived

exertion and your body rythmn at least a few times a week in all the disciplines of our sport. Most of the time in training, especially when I go to a new town, I often test myself by doing the following.

I leave the hotel room for a run and check the clock before I leave. I then say to myself, ok I am going to go and run for 1 hour. When I come back I try and see how close to that hour I actually was. I take no watch with me nor do I set any preconceived pace. I run freely and try and feel my way to understanding just how long I have been running by my surroundings and my pace and effort. Funnily enough, the fitter I get the better I am at getting very close to the hour. Early in the season I have gone for what I thought was an hour run and been only 45 minutes. Its crazy how skewed your perceived effort and time can be without the use of tools sometimes. Now I feel very confident I can nail a 10 mile run on feeling without relying on a garmin to tell me and I could run 90 minutes pretty close to the minute without relying on a watch. It is something I enjoy testing myself with weekly and the more you do it, the greater you will start to feel this freedom of exercise and this tune that you have never paid attention to before. It is this understanding sometimes that will be your biggest strength in a race.

If you do have a Garmin or a testing tool, another recommended session would be to turn off all those alarms and beeps and say to yourself, ok I am going to run 6 miles at a perceived pace and run it without looking at anything. When you feel like you have run 6 miles, you stop and see how close to the pace and the distance you were. I have always felt the closer you can get to "feeling" your way through many of these types of sessions where

you don't use training tools, or use them as an extension to a perceived exertion set, the better you will progress. To race well understanding your body, its link to the mind and your link to the control you have over pace and exertion can play huge dividends for you. Try it next time you head out training and see how good you are at "knowing your athletic you"

Anyway not sure what that blog was all about, but after listening to Brett Suttons podcast, it was great to hear that one of the sports most successful coaches thinks the same thing as me sometimes. Forget all the crap and just get the work done and enjoy what your doing. You will see much more success by keeping things simple. I like simple!