

20 things you NEED to Master to not DNF an Ironman. (Not in order of importance). Insert hyperlink including affiliate links

1. Bad breakfast: Bad or no breakfast can make for a miserable day on the course, especially if you are used to eating specific thing. When you are training, that is the perfect time to try it out. What breakfast fuels you and doesn't cause negative side effects sooner or later!
2. Practice open water: You MUST practice open water swimming before race day. You might have swam in a pool every day of your life, but the most experienced swimmers struggle in open water IF they are not prepared by practicing in the open water
3. Water Temperature: A wet suit will make the swim much easier- if it is the right temperature, so make sure you know the projected temperature so you can PRACTICE IN or OUT of the wetsuit depending on the conditions
4. Wet Suits: All wetsuits are not created equal, long sleeve and sleeveless as well as the brand can all impact your stroke in different ways. If the conditions are in the warmer end yet wetsuit legal you want a sleeveless. But, just bc it's colder doesn't automatically you need the long sleeve - try them out.

5. Putting your wetsuit on: It takes a long time to put your wetsuit on. Stick your feet in grocery bags and step into your suit- you'll slide in much more quickly, but practice and plan because rushing to get your wetsuit on can exert a lot of energy and start your race out poorly.
6. Goggles: make sure you have goggles that you can see out of very well- no scratched lenses and most likely they need to be tented.
7. Plan your transitions: There's not much of a worse feeling in Ironmans, than crossing the finish line and you're past the cutoff time!!! The EASIEST way to save time and exert very little energy is to plan and practice your transitions. This means put on your exact race gear efficiently - over and over and over. This also means knowing where your gear is and knowing the entrances and exits
8. Extra Gear: It's ok to keep some extras in you gear bag, extra socks, backup pair of sunglass, body glide, butter for cycling, or even Some nutrition/hydration incase you need it after the swim or bike. If you don't have all your gear, there is a lot higher probability you will DNF
9. Butt Butter and Bodyglide: I know when doing an Ironman we all expect discomfort at some point. But there is muscular and systemic discomfort but then there's the kind of discomfort that comes from chafing etc. this can be so impossible to deal with on a really long day, so I'm a huge believer in the necessity of these products. They can save your day.

10. Mechanical Bike Issues: mechanical issues can cause a DNF no matter how many miles you have trained. Anything from a broken chain to handle bars breaking can end your day quickly. Having a tune up done on your bike prior to the race making sure all parts are in working order is imperative for not having a DNF
11. Know how to change a flat: My first Ironman I was 6 miles into the bike - yes 6 miles, when I got a flat. Luckily one week before my friend taught me how to change a flat. I was slow but still much faster than Sag came around. Although Ironman races are well stocked with volunteers if Sag is helping others, it can be a while before they get to you - so make sure you know how to do it your self.
12. Hydration. It is no doubt that hydration is extremely important during an Ironman, not just to have a successful race, but for your own well being. It is important that your hydration is not simply water. Some people don't love the fluids served on the course- you might prefer something like Liquid IV (I use this, and recommend it to my athletes and it is wildly successful. But there are so many options out there. You need to have a good understanding of how much fluids you need to consume and then also adjust for weather etc.
13. Electrolytes. This is not something that should usually be handled just through your hydration. You should be sure to look into other types of electrolytes such as Endurolytes by Hammer Nutrition or Salt Stick. Sometimes the capsules are great to swallow because

even if your stomach does not want you to take in more gels or chews, the capsules can be easy to swallow.

14. Nutrition. Nutrition is essential. Although when the Ironman first originated years ago? There were not the same types of race nutrition that we have now, that doesn't mean we shouldn't take advantage of it. There are SO many options. You need to decide if you want to carry your own nutrition (some is recommended regardless) or go with the brands and items that will be served on race day. Some people like solid food. Some people only like liquids. Some want a combo. In the race information you will be able to see what is on the course and this will help you know how much to bring.
15. Meals leading up to race day: often times people are traveling for Iron Man's and this can be lots of fun but it can also create a unique obstacle trying new foods. Lots of people love to try new foods when they travel but the days leading up to an Ironman is not ideal for this. Other chain restaurants are not always as fun and exciting as local restaurants if you were used to consuming certain foods at restaurants I know you can get up the next morning and eat these with no problem it might be best to do this the days leading up to race day when you were traveling other options include bringing certain foods with you that you eat on a consistent basis peanut butter and jelly sandwiches different snacks you like and things like that. Obviously you do not want to be under calories the days leading up to the races so if you can't get something from a restaurant that you know and trust may be

trying something more basic that you know your body can consume well such as a piece of grilled chicken and a baked potato or Pasta with marinara sauce obviously each person has their own list of foods that sit well with them so I'm not recommending a specific food but foods that your body are used to and you know that your body handles well this is critically important for the days leading up to race day after the Iron Man eat whatever you please that your body can tolerate.

16. Morning gear bag. This might seem a little silly but make sure you wear what you want to wear leading up to the start of the race is important you're allowed to have a bag to put your gear in before you start the race but often times this is located a bit from the actual starting line. Make sure you know where you were going to be starting and where you'll have to drop off the morning special needs bag so that you can plan if you have a friend or a family member with you this makes it less critical but if you were on your own you might get into a predicament because you are wearing something that you don't want to leave at the side of the race. Be assured if you were wearing shoes or clothing that you want to wear during the bike or run portion of the race you will be out of luck this must be in your transition bags if it is very close from the start and the place where you have to deposit your morning gear bag you could wear an old pair of shoes or flip-flops that you are willing to discard to the start of the race.

17. Special needs bag. This bag can make or break your day just like other certain items on the IRONMAN course. Each Iron Man is slightly different in the location where you can pick up the special-needs bag but there is a location on the bike and a location on the run where you can pick up the special needs bag and that you packed. Anything and everything can go in this bag from an extra hat water bottle Cheetos, Oreos, gummy worms a peanut butter and jelly sandwich sunscreen body glide or anything you think you might need in the race. My version of this was Cheetos nacho cheese Doritos Oreos animal crackers and a few clothing items that I thought I might want just in case including a light weight jacket to put on in the second half of the run as the temperature started to drop. It's up to you but again if you practice enough you'll learn what you need during the later part of the races and this is critically important and can get you from feeling depleted of energy to a strong finish.
18. Not practicing the small things Practice Makes Permanent! Practice, Practice - if you always start out swimming in a sprint- you'll do it on race day, if you always walk the first mile off your bike, you'll do it on race day, it's your choice how you like to race, but however you want to race, is how you need to train! I've seen experienced triathletes crashing getting on their bike or off their bike in transition and it ended resulted in a DNF. Practice well and you will race well.
19. Not being prepared enough Failing to prepare is preparing to fail: the little things matter. This is different

than just practicing. This can involve all types of logistics. Whether it's practicing putting on your wetsuit, practicing mounting and dismounting from your bike, know if you want to wear one swim cap or two, knowing if you want to wear your goggles over or under your cap, knowing how much hydration and nutrition you need per hour. All of this should be planned and practiced in your training! And all of it can make or break your race day!

20. Nothing new on race day. This is a lesson that a lot of people learn really difficultly. Sometimes people find exciting items at the expo the day before the race and they decide they have to have this new top or these new shoes or this new shirt or try these new goggles for the race unfortunately an Iron Man is way too long to be guessing about what you want to use on race day use what you know and know what you use this goes from things you consume to things you wear don't try anything new remember practice makes permanent.