

# It's Your Choice

Doing things the hard way is the easy way to get the triathlon results you deserve, writes resident swim coach Wayne Goldsmith.

Words: Wayne Goldsmith | Images: Thinkstock

*“The difference between a good athlete and a great athlete is that in any given situation, when offered the choice of doing things the hard way or the easy way, a great athlete will always choose the hard way. It’s the cumulative effect of always doing things the hard way that makes all the difference.”*

– USA swimming coach David Marsh (Marsh has coached 47 Olympians from 19 different countries and has coached swimming teams to achieve a record 12 NCAA titles).

**W**e’re living in a ‘more for less’ society. People are looking for more: more money, more opportunities, more success, but with less effort, in less time and with the expenditure of fewer resources. People want it all, they want it now and they want it exactly how they want it. It’s a world where convenience is king, where waiting is intolerable and where hard work, discipline, commitment and dedication are mostly dirty words. It’s a world of compromise: where pushing yourself to and beyond your limits early on a Sunday morning is less desirable than enjoying a good cafe latte, a late brunch and some shopping for organic candles at a nice little market somewhere.

Triathletes, however, in direct contrast with this ‘more for less’ trend, deliberately and consciously pursue challenges to overcome, obstacles to face and mountains to climb. While much of the world looks for ways to avoid hard work, triathletes actively and enthusiastically embrace it.

The real challenge then is this. For the average adult wanting to join the ranks of the weekend warriors and become an age-group triathlete, it would be easy to think all you’ve got to do is buy a bike, find some expensive running shoes, purchase a matching fluoro Lycra outfit, train for a few months and voila! You’re a triathlete!

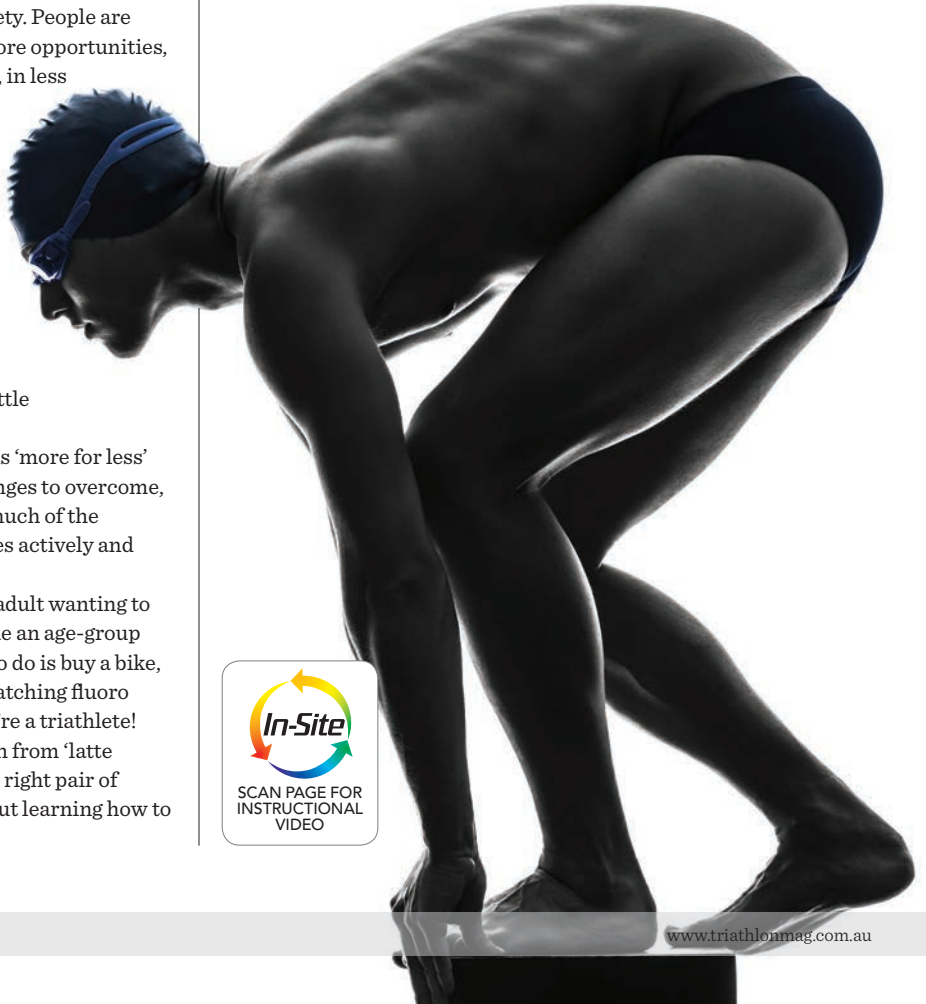
In reality, the challenge in making the transition from ‘latte to lactate’ is not about finding the right bike or the right pair of running shoes or a great swimming coach, it’s about learning how to do things the hard way.

So what does it mean to do things the hard way? Triathlon is not so much a sport as a complete lifestyle change; it’s a transformation from the ordinary to the extra-ordinary, from the acceptance of mediocrity to the pursuit of magnificence.

The sport demands that participants are committed to change; changing habits, changing routines, changing timetables, changing diet and changing their level of commitment to things like sleep, rest, recovery and personal time management.

Understanding the easy way–hard way concept can really help with the triathlete transformation process as it gives each triathlete a framework for making the right decision at the right time.

Here are 10 practical examples of situations you might encounter over the course of a typical day where doing things the hard way amounts to making the right choice for your triathlon success.



**1 Wake up:** The alarm goes off at 6am. Hit the snooze button, roll over and go back to sleep – or – Get out of bed immediately, eat something light and healthy and head out for training.

**2 Breakfast:** Drink one of those (healthy?) liquid breakfasts – or – Eat a healthy, natural breakfast of wholegrain cereal and toast, fresh fruit, low-fat yoghurt and fresh juice.

**3 Lunch:** Eat a quick deep-fried snack on the way to a meeting – or – Eat two chicken and salad rolls, a small tub of low-fat yoghurt, a handful of almonds and piece of fresh fruit.

**4 Swim session:** Breathe whenever you feel like it – or – Control your breathing, particularly when you are tired, and try not to breathe inside the backstroke flags.

**5 Cycling session:** Cruise along at the back of the pace line, enjoying the scenery and avoid working too hard – or – Take every turn in front that you can get, lead the group when you can and take every possible opportunity to 'face the wind'.

**6 Run session:** Do your warm-up drills and running skills training sloppily and with little attention to detail – or – Focus on every detail and every aspect of your running technique, putting as much energy and effort into your drills and technique work as you do into your actual running training sets.

**7 Friday night:** Head down to the pub or club and drink as much as you can with your friends and colleagues until closing time – or – Head down to the pub or club and drink with your friends, colleagues, etc, enjoy a couple of drinks, then head home for a good night's sleep in preparation for a great weekend of training.

**8 Triathlon race:** Spend your time looking for drafters, worry about what other people are doing, find fault in the conditions and and blame everyone and everything else for a less-than-perfect performance – or – Do the best you can, learn from the experience, deal with whatever challenges and obstacles you have to face during the race and take responsibility for your own performance.

**9 After the race:** Sit around for hours talking about the race then head to the pub for an 'I deserve it because I raced today' booze-up – or – Enjoy a quick catch up with your friends and training partners before heading home to rest, recover and start preparing for your next training session.

**10 Nighttime:** Sit watching re-runs of re-runs of TV shows that you didn't really enjoy the first time you saw them – or – Be in bed by 10pm at the latest every night, ensuring you get a great sleep to help ready you for another day as a triathlete.


### Win or lose – you choose

Success is a choice. As a triathlete, you can choose the level of success you can achieve by learning to make the right choice at the right time. It's not about the bike. It's not about wearing the right running shoes. It's not about finding the perfect course, the perfect wind and road conditions or looking for the perfect day when all your triathlon dreams come true. It's about you. And it's about the choices you make every day in everything you do.

## Summary

**1** In a world where comfort and compromise are king, triathletes willingly, enthusiastically and energetically pursue challenge, difficulty and even pain to achieve personal success.

**2** In every situation, as a triathlete you will have to face the choice of doing things the easy way or the hard way. Sometimes it's difficult to make this choice – particularly if you've made the decision to significantly change your lifestyle and transform your life as an adult/age grouper...which is why so few people ever realise their full triathlon potential.

**3** Start with something simple like getting out of bed early or eating the right breakfast and watch how learning how to make the hard decisions can quickly deliver outstanding triathlon results. 



Wayne Goldsmith is a triathlon coach who has worked with both Triathlon Australia and Swimming Australia

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