



BRITISH
TRIATHLON

Racing: in the heat



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1. Be prepared

Triathlons take place in all conditions around the world. While our temperature is normally quite moderate races in the UK can be hot and most races in Europe and further abroad are often even warmer.

The most important aspect of dealing with the heat is to **BE PREPARED**.

- Look at the weather forecast
- Pay attention to the humidity as well as the temperature.
- Higher humidity (80% +) can make you feel a lot warmer
- Plan for all eventualities
- Know and understand the **rules** (e.g. wetsuit cut off)



For most of us in the UK assuming lower humidity (<75%) around 25°C + is getting hot and around 30°C + is really quite hot. Endurance performance will be impaired when temperatures go over 25°C quite how much depends on the individual as we all respond differently to heat. Good heat preparation will have a huge impact here .

Full heat adaptation will take place over 10 to 14 days and require you to spend around 10 to 12 x 60-90min sessions in hot conditions at a steady pace (shorter if you are operating at a higher pace). Those racing abroad in hot ETU or ITU events during cool weather conditions in the UK should get in touch regards more information on heat prep strategies.

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2. Stay cool before the start

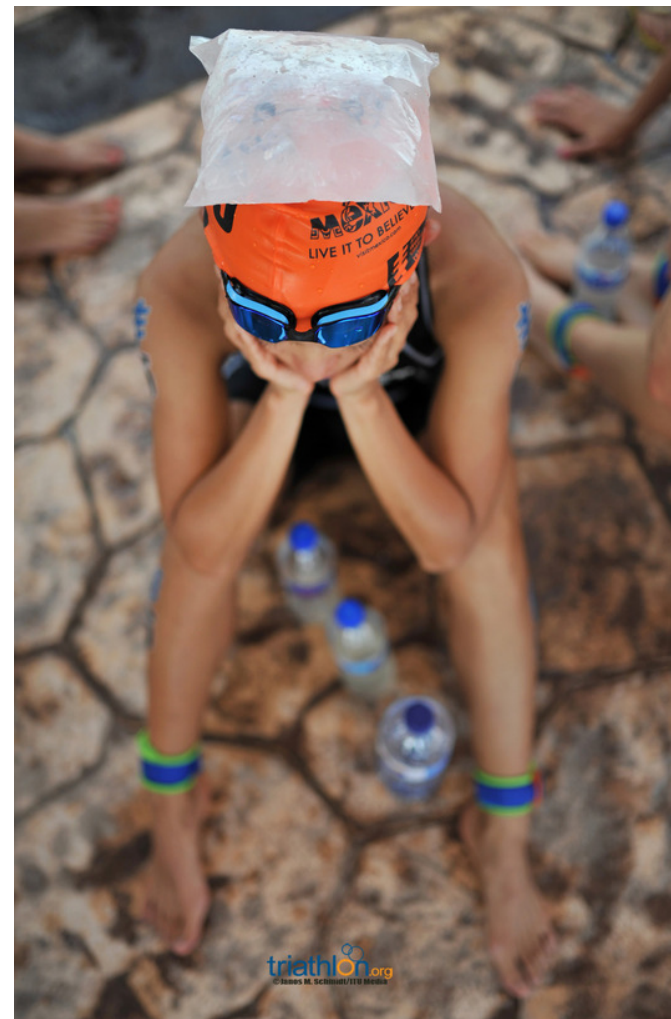
- Take something that can provide you some shade unless you know this is easy to find at the venue
- Staying in the shade pre-race as much as you can is the single most important thing to do
- Ensure you apply waterproof suncream at least 20 mins before arrival and certainly before you start sweating: Rymans P20 is a good option here
- If a wetsuit swim leave it as late as possible to put your suit on especially the top half
- Keep your swim hat off your head until the last minute



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3. Be prepared to adjust your warm up

- Adjust your warm up accordingly. The hotter it is the shorter your warm up should be take out the easier (endurance) sections and leave in the shorter/harder accelerations, this will heat you up less but still have good physiological gain. Warm up in the shade if able.
- If you feel a bit too hot after your warm up have something on hand to cool you down
- A cold wet hand towel is best over your head or neck/shoulders - use ice and water in a cool bag to wet the towel. A plastic bag of ice can work too - [see pic](#)
- Standing or putting your hands in the cool bag can help too if really warm - as will having a cold drink!
- Once you start your core temperature will continue to rise throughout the race - so starting with the lowest possible core temperature is your best course of action in a hot race.
- The longer the race the more impact heat will have - racing Super Sprint is much less likely to impact an athlete than racing Sprint.



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4. During the race



- Pacing is very important in a hot race. Normally this only applies to the run as there is significant cooling from the water in the swim and the wind/air flow on the bike. If extremely hot it will apply to the bike too
 - Very simply the harder you work the hotter you get
 - Racing in the heat is about controlling your core temperature. A more conservative approach to pacing therefore is advised in a hot race - going off hard from T2 can mean your core temperature rising at an uncontrollable rate. Building into your run, assessing how you go and looking to negative split is a more sensible approach
- Heat also affects how fast you can operate - run speeds for example will always be slower in the heat.
 - Everyone is different here and your level of heat preparation, the on the day temperature and your ability to manage the heat will decide how much slower you are

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4. During the race

- Drinking on the run for Sprint and Super-Sprint is not normally advised as it takes around 20m for fluid to clear the gut. So if you need to drink do it on the bike.
- Throwing water over you can help though with cooling thanks to evaporation.



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5. Hydration

- Stay properly hydrated in the lead up to the race e.g. the 2-3 days before.
- Ensure that you stay hydrated directly prior to the race - sip little and often.
- Depending on the heat and your potential sweat rate you might want to consider drinking water on the bike, especially if racing over sprint distance. An insulated bottle (see pic) with frozen water in it might help here. Practice this prior so you don't end up with an ice block in your bottle when you want to drink!
- You also use more energy in the heat – so for any race longer than super-sprint you may need an energy drink or an energy gel. Drinking and/or feeding on the bike will require practice prior to the race to ensure you don't feel sick running.



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6. After the race

- Try and cool down as quickly as you can - seeking shade, cold drinks and a cold towel will really help here.

7. What to look out for

- The most common symptoms of over heating usually begin with you starting to drift backwards and fall off the pace you have been holding. This is normally combined with, or will quickly lead to, a headache and/or feeling dizzy or light headed - you may also feel nauseous and/or start to breathe more shallowly.
- If you feel you are over-heating you should slow down immediately, look to find a marshal and some shade



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8. Final Thoughts

- Most everything discussed is easy to facilitate if planned for and thought about beforehand.
- Planning ahead, and being flexible and adaptable at the same time, is important in this sport; weather conditions can change rapidly and ensuring you have covered all eventualities will help you to prepare and stand on the start line in the best frame of mind to take the race on whatever the conditions.