

## Training Document:

# Recovery after Racing by Gale Bernhardt

At least once a week during race season I receive an email asking, “How long should it take me to recover from my race?” It’s a great question.

The first question I ask is, “What sport did you race?” In general, given the three sports of cycling, triathlon and running, people typically recover faster from a three-hour road race than they do from a three-hour running event. Triathlon recovery falls between cycling and running. While some people prefer to use miles logged in the race as the measuring stick, I use race time.

Recovery time does depend on many factors. Several of the factors are discussed later in the document. A starting point to estimate your recovery time is:

- ▶ Bicycle Races: 1 to 3 days per hour of racing
- ▶ Triathlon Races: 3 to 5 days per hour of racing
- ▶ Running Races: 4 to 6 days per hour of racing

In the list above, I am referring to full recovery or the next time you can do a difficult or break through workout without that workout being compromised in any way by fatigue. You might feel good enough to do a moderate workout in half the time listed above, but you won’t be ready to do a hard session or another race.

I have found how fast an athlete recovers from an event depends on several factors before, during and after the race. These factors are “modifiers” to the recovery days listed previously on this page. These factors are “modifiers” and are relative to each sport and the individual athlete. A table of modifiers is listed on the next page, ranking stress at a 1, 2 or 3 level. The more scores you have in the number 3 ranking column, the more your recovery will be negatively affected. In other words, your recovery time will be longer.

Continued

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Ranking Value	1	2	3
<b>Before the Race</b>			
1. Age	< 40	40-60	60+
2. Level of conditioning	High	Medium	Low
3. Nutritional status	Great	Average	Poor
4. Taper and rest	Great	Average	Poor
5. Athletic experience in the sport	>10 years	5-10 years	<5 years
6. Life stress (family/job/personal/travel)	Low	Medium	High
<b>The Race</b>			
1. Sport	Cycling	Triathlon	Running
2. Distance of the event (also related to athlete ability)	Short	Medium	Long
3. Racing intensity (relative to that particular race distance)	Using it as a training day	Medium intensity	All-out, highest average speed
4. Nutritional practice (fueling/hydration)	Great	Average	Poor
5. Course	Easy	Moderate	Difficult
6. Weather conditions (temperature/humidity)	Perfect	Okay	Bad
<b>After the Race</b>			
1. Nutritional practice (fueling/hydration)	Great	Average	Poor
2. Life stress (family/job/personal/travel)	Low	Medium	High
3. Type of workouts done in the days following the event (intensity/duration)	Easy/Short	Moderate	Fast and/or Long

To use an extreme example, an athlete completing a two-hour triathlon, with all factors in the number 1 column will likely recover in about six days. If that same athlete has all factors in the number 3 column, full recovery from the race may take as much as 10 days – assuming no injury or illness. Add illness or injury and recovery time is extended.

When heading into the next race, if you make a good effort to control some of the factors listed on the chart, you can expect a faster recovery.