

Coach Class

Choosing a new coach

Often overlooked, a good coach – perhaps more than anything else you choose to spend your hard-earned on – can help you cut minutes from your next race. But how do you go about finding one and what should you look for? Who better to fill you in than Triathlon Australia national manager for coach development, Wayne Goldsmith.

WORDS: WAYNE GOLDSMITH | IMAGES: THINKSTOCK

All set for a great season of success, outstanding performances and wonderful triathlon experiences? New swimming costumes, cap, goggles, fins, paddles, pullbuoy and kickboard? Bike all sorted? New wheels and tyres, new brakes, a comfortable new seat and a really slick, new low drag helmet? And new running shoes? The latest and greatest with anti-pronation, anti-supination, anti-shock and anti-slip?

What's missing? What could be the one thing you haven't got to help you swim, bike and run better than ever before? What's the one thing that

could make a real difference to your performance and help you achieve your competition goals this season? Answer... a good triathlon coach. The right triathlon-specific coach can help you to become the triathlete you want to be, but the question is, how do you find the right coach for you?

The six Es of a good triathlon coach

- **Experience:** Find a coach who is actually a triathlon coach. Now that sounds a little obvious, but triathlon is a very complex, challenging sport with technical, tactical, physical and mental demands in swim, bike, run and

transition, which demand the skills, expertise and knowledge of a coach who understands the real nature of the sport.

- **Enthusiasm:** Find a coach who gives as much to you and your training as you do. If you see a coach standing at the end of the pool, taking calls on their mobile phone, resting their feet up on the starting blocks and not giving you continual feedback and technique instruction – find another coach.
- **Education:** Triathlon Australia has a coach education and training program with something to suit every coach. Check out www.triathlon.org.

COACH'S CORNER

TEN TIPS TO BECOMING AN OUTSTANDING TRIATHLON COACH

1 Never stop learning: Coaching is a commitment to lifelong learning, personal improvement and professional development.

2 Inspire athletes: Inspire athletes to be all they can be through your own attitude, professionalism, commitment and personal standards.

3 Be enthusiastic: Give athletes the same level of energy, enthusiasm and passion that you demand from them.

4 Be a student of the sport: Learn as much as you can about the sport: racing technique, swim, bike, run, transition skills, rules, training techniques, sports science, equipment, technology, competition environments, injury

management, sprint distance, long course, Ironman...all of it.

5 Believe in something: Have a coaching philosophy and live it! If you don't stand for something, you will fall for anything.

6 Know yourself: Know your strengths, know your weaknesses, understand your own reasons and motivations for coaching. If you don't know who you are and why you do it, your athletes never will.

7 Listen and Look: Coaches have two ears, two eyes and one mouth for a reason...listen and look twice as much as you speak.

8 Take a long-term approach: Many triathletes want to do

an Ironman in their first season. It's your job to plan and plot a long-term approach to their training and development.

9 Provide feedback: Work with your athletes and provide them with clear, quality instruction and feedback continually: performance is a partnership.

10 Everyone deserves you: Triathletes are passionate, dedicated, determined people. Doesn't matter if they are in their first year of training and just want to finish a triathlon – the 'bucket-lister' – or if they are on a path to a sub 10-hour Ironman... they all need your best coaching every day.



Wayne Goldsmith is the national manager of coach development for Triathlon Australia.





au and go to 'coaching' to learn more.

- **Empathy:** It is important to find a coach who will listen to you, who understands you and your motivation for being involved in the sport and who will work with you as a performance-partner as you train and race.
- **Encouragement:** Work with a coach who encourages and energises you...someone who acknowledges your efforts and gives you praise when it is deserved.
- **Excellence:** Find a coach who wants to be successful. A rising tide lifts all boats: a coach who wants to be successful and is committed to learning, development and excellence is the driving force behind a 'tide' that you want to be on.

Triathlon coach score sheet

To help you find the right triathlon coach, here is a triathlon coach score sheet that you can use to help you decide when to hire (or maybe fire) someone who wants to provide you with triathlon coaching services. (Table 1)

Scoring key

Coach scores less than 10: Maybe it's time to look for another triathlon coach and maybe it's time for them to look for another profession!
Coach scores 10–20: The

Coaching Quality	Scoring
Experience	Add 10 points if the coach has more than 10 years of experience working with triathletes Add 5 points if the coach has 5–10 years of experience working with triathletes.
Enthusiasm	Add 10 points if the coach is positive, enthusiastic and passionate at every training session Add 5 points if the coach is positive, enthusiastic and passionate at most training sessions
Education	Add 10 points if the coach is currently accredited with Triathlon Australia Add 5 points if the coach is currently accredited with Swimming Australia, Cycling Australia and/or Athletics Australia
Empathy	Add 10 points if the coach meets with you regularly, gives you personalised feedback and advice, listens to you and provides you with an individualised approach to your training and competition Add 5 points if the coach meets with you once or twice a season and provides you with an individualised training and competition program
Encouragement	Add 10 points if the coach encourages and inspires you to be all you can be at every training session Add 5 points if the coach encourages you when they think you need it
Excellence	Add 10 points if the coach creates an individualised daily training environment that provides you with the opportunity to be all you can be Add 5 points if the coach creates a good, basic daily training environment for all the members of the triathlon team/club
TOTAL SCORE:	

TABLE 1

coach shows some basic qualities of a good triathlon coach but still has a lot to learn.

Coach scores 21–30: The coach is beginning to show some of the qualities of a good triathlon coach and has the potential to be even better with a real commitment to training, education and development.

Coach scores 31–40: The coach is on the verge of becoming an excellent triathlon coach but needs to keep working on their training, education and development.


Coach scores 41–50: The

coach shows most of qualities and attributes of an excellent triathlon coach and can take you a long way in the sport.

Coach scores over 50: "Look out Macca. Look out Crowie." This is the coach that can take you as far as you want to go.

Summary

1. Finding the right triathlon coach for you often comes down to a personal decision: many triathletes don't care how much the coach knows, they want to know how much the coach cares.

2. Find a coach whose six Es match your own triathlon goals, ambitions and dreams; someone who can be a partner with you on your triathlon journey.
3. Regardless of how well your coach scores, success is still your choice. The greatest coach in the world with the best facilities and most outstanding training program will not make you a great triathlete. Success is still up to you and how you apply yourself to your training, recovery and competition. 

CHANGE A LIFE... BECOME A COACH

Triathlon Australia is committed to training, coaching and developing the world's best triathlon coaches. If you want to learn more visit:
www.triathlon.org.au/Coaches/TA_National_Coaching_Programme.htm



TRIATHLON
AUSTRALIA