

Solana Beach Sun

Opinion

I'm not abused, I'm hardcore

I'm crying. Here I was ready to write a column about how pumped I was to do my first mini-triathlon in Solana Beach, and how you, the reader, should, too.

I run three miles and my right knee says screw you.

I have tendonitis in my knee, or so my doctor says. He wasn't wearing a "Trust me, I'm a doctor" T-shirt, but he was wearing a white smock and a stethoscope, so I do.

Three weeks rest, the doctor says.

THREE WEEKS!

The triathlon is in three weeks, so no tri for me.

It would appear I "overdid it". The number one piece of advice for beginners from all the tri-gurus: Don't do too much, too fast; you're bound to hurt yourself.

Apparently, I have a tendency to do just that.

I've been sporting a pretty rockin' black eye the last couple weeks from my first surfing lesson. I was going for the full experience to write a three-part expose on local surf culture (check out the last installment next week), and somehow the board hit me in the face when I was flailing about underwater.

Just about everyone in Solana Beach has offered to beat up my abusive boyfriend.

Unless you count the white-mustached, married dude who took me surfing, there's no such thing. But thank you all for your support.

Despite the bumps and bruises, I'm a firm believer in hands-on reporting and trying new things.

So even if I can't be out there for the Solana Beach Triathlon - you should.

The July 29 race consists of a quarter-mile ocean swim at Fletcher Cove, a nine-mile bike ride and three-mile run on trusty Highway 101. It's one of the most easygoing, friendly sprint triathlons in the region.

"You could breaststroke the swim and walk the run if you really wanted to," said Steve Tally,



LAURA PETERSEN

a beginner's coach with the Triathlon Club of San Diego. "There will be people riding their beach cruisers with tassels."

In other words, you don't need to be Ian Thorpe, Lance Armstrong or Larry Lebow to finish. The idea is just to get out there for an exploratory, fun experience.

You also don't need a lot of fancy equipment like high-tech swimming wetsuits, heart rate monitors, and thousand dollar bikes.

"Going in with the mind set the only person I'm competing with is me, you don't need all that stuff," said 1981 Ironman Champion John Howard. "The Solana Beach race is great, treat it as an adventure."

But we don't want any injuries. While you don't need fancy equipment, you need to make sure what you are using fits properly. This is the most important thing to prevent injuries, besides not overdoing it, (ahem, note to Laura).

Here are some tips for beginners:

Bike Fit: Go to your local, knowledgeable bike shop to make sure your seat and handle bars are adjusted correctly so you aren't putting undo stress on your knees and back. Cost: \$100/hour at B&L Bike Shop in Solana Beach.

Shoe Fit: If you've had a pair of running shoes for several years, it's time to replace them. Shoes break down and lose their support after 250-to-400 miles of wear. Go to Road Runner Sports in Clairemont Mesa, 5553 Copley Drive, or the San Diego Running Institute, 4760-B Mission Gorge Place. Staff will suggest the best fitting shoe based on foot meas-



Laura with Ira Opper, award-winning surf film producer after her black-eye incident. Her nickname: Shiner.

DANIELLE CADIEUX

urements and visual analysis of your gait as you run on a treadmill. Analysis is free at Road Runner, \$25 without shoe purchase, free with purchase at Running Institute.

Wetsuit Fit: Wetsuits will make you faster in the water because they provide buoyancy. Beginners can get by with a surfing wetsuit, but it might inhibit range of motion. The Solana race is so short, I was considering not even bothering. You can rent swimming wetsuits, but again, you have to try them on and make sure they fit comfortably. Usually, information on rentals is provided during pre-registration.

Whether you are a gym rat or just starting a fitness regime, you don't want to go cold turkey on race day. Three weeks is still enough time to practice for a fun, non-competitive experience. Here are a few training pointers from the pros.

1. Practice your weaknesses. For example, if you bike to work, focus your training time out of the saddle.

2. Transitioning between each sport is one of the trickiest parts of triathlons. Practice in "bricks," short workouts of biking and running, to train your body to adjust quickly between the two sports.

"You can gain tremendous amount of value doing short segment workouts," said Howard, who recommended 30 minutes maximum of biking followed by 15 minutes of running.

3. Don't waste your time in the

gym weight training in these next few weeks - no one is lifting dumbbells on race day.

4. How many times do I have to say it? Don't overdo it. Take a rest day. Taper workouts as the race approaches to ensure you are well rested.

5. Stay hydrated and get a good night's sleep the days leading up to the race.

6. Make sure nothing is new on race day. Practice with all equipment and swim in the ocean, not just the pool.

7. Eat a sensible meal by 6 p.m. the night before the race, and get equipment with race numbers prepared.

8. On race day, get up early to eat a light power breakfast, arrive early to warm up and get in the water before the race starts.

9. Beginner runners should wear socks.

10. Leave the watches and timers at home.

"Otherwise, you are going to look back on this accomplishment and all you're going to remember is how fast you were going," said triathlete coach Kam Zardouzian.

For more information about the Solana Beach Triathlon, go to www.kozenterprises.com. Check out the friendliest triathlon club around: www.triclubsandiego.org.

Even if triathlons aren't your thing, take this summer to try something new.

Life is an adventure, and well worth the incidental black eye.