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Triathlon Glossary

1.5k Swim – .9 miles, the distance of the swimming portion of an Olympic-distance triathlon.

40k Bike – 24.8 miles, the distance of the cycling portion of an Olympic-distance triathlon.

10k Run – 6.2 miles, the distance of the running portion of an Olympic-distance triathlon.

Age Group – Amateur multisport athletes are called age-groupers. They compete against each other in age groups of five-year increments. Age-groupers never compete in draft-legal races and cannot accept monetary prizes of more than \$5,000.

Aquathlon – A multisport event consisting of a swim and a run.

Breakaway – similar to a surge in running, when one or more athletes increase their speed significantly in an attempt to create distance between themselves and the rest of the competitors.

Draft Legal – In draft-legal events, athletes may cycle directly behind another competitor, allowing them to work together against the wind. Many elite events, including the Olympic Games, are draft legal, creating large packs of athletes and very close, exciting finishes.

Duathlon – a multisport event similar to triathlon, usually in a run-bike-run format. The common world championship distance is a 10k run, followed by a 40k bike and a 5k run.

Elite – Another word for “pro.” Multisport athletes must qualify to become “elite” or “pro.” Once they do, usually they can compete for prize money over \$5,000. Only elite or pro triathletes can try to qualify for the Olympic Team and compete in draft-legal events.

ITU – International Triathlon Union. The international federation for the sport of triathlon. USA Triathlon is a member of ITU.

Non-drafting – Almost all amateur age group events are non-drafting, meaning athletes must maintain a staggered position on the bike relative to the cyclist directly ahead to avoid any advantage gained from drafting. Non-drafting triathlon is a true test of an athlete against the course and the clock.

Olympic-format – the style of the triathlon that will be contested in the Olympic Games and all international games. It usually consists of a multi-lap course in all three disciplines and a draft-legal format during the swimming and cycling portions. This style of racing is generally recognized by athletes grouped together during all three disciplines. Generally the finishing times are much closer in Olympic-format triathlon.

Pack riding – while cycling, two or more participants work together to improve performance, efficiency or position by teamwork or other joint conduct.

Pro – See “elite.”

Surge – similar to a breakaway in cycling, when one or more athletes increase their speed significantly in an attempt to create distance between themselves and the rest of the competitors.

Transition area – the hub of the triathlon course, the place in which the athletes transform from swimmer to cyclist to runner. Races can be won or lost in the time it takes for athletes to change from one discipline to another.

Triathlon – a sport combining any three different athletic disciplines in continuum, such as swimming, cycling and running.

T1 – the swim-to-bike transition.

T2 – the bike-to-run transition.



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