

The “OFF Season”

THE TRIZONE

By Anne Mitchell (AKA Annie)



PhysicallyFIT

Each issue, PhillyFIT Magazine, looks at the local triathlon and multisport scene to give you the best advice on what is out there and where to go. I am going to do my best to fill Steve Brown's shoes and at the same time, add a little tweak.

Exactly what is “OFF SEASON”? Does it mean your season is over? Does it mean you start all over? Does it mean you turn off your exercise until it gets warmer and lighter outside?

The answer is “No” to all of the aforementioned. Off season is just an interim time between competitions and/or harder longer weekend warrior workouts. It is a great time to “cross train.” By definition with Wikipedia – the Free Encyclopedia: “Cross-training is also known as conditioning. It refers to training in different ways to improve overall performance.”

Off season and cross training is a time to rest injuries or nagging body parts. It is a time to focus on sport areas that are weaker. It is a time to work on your core.

Where to start?

How did you do and what did you do the last six months or so? Were you a runner, triathlete, duathlete, tennis player, golfer or weekend participant? In any and all cases, now is the time to work on general body strengthening of the core and large muscle areas. The weather outside may be colder and wetter for you to participate as much for the next three to four months. Indoors offers a lot of core and strength work. Yoga and Pilates are two excellent programs that most people find harder than they thought once they try. I am a yoga person more so than a Pilate's person. I have tried Pilates and like it, but yoga feels more “sport” oriented to me. I would suggest you try both and find the one for you. Yoga is hard, but it strengthens your core and muscles and it is outstanding for flexibility and stability. All of those components from yoga and or Pilates will give your next “on season” a more balanced powerful start.

Recover is Key

Let your body and mind rest and recover from weeks of exercise. The body adapts to stress

and as your season progressed, so did the times and results. A normal amount of exercise will maintain your current fitness level. Back off for 4-6 weeks to give your body a fresh reawakening. When you start to increase workouts and mileage for the next season, you

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Progression

You need time to recover to progress to your next level. You need to “overload” – exercising above a target zone. This can be done during your off season and with good results as you can rest between sessions. During regular season, you may not get as much time to rest in between. You should not feel exhaustion during your off season - rather you should get antsy to get back outside by January or February.

Adaptation

You have adapted your body to a sport or activity. It will not forget what to do with a few weeks of rest. Now is time to add something new to enhance your training. More weights? Heavier weights? Indoor cycling? Master swimming? Whatever it may be, now is the time to add it. Many times, one will get sore from something new. **TO BE SORE IS GOOD**, as it shows you are working new or more muscles and the end result will be power and strength. Your local bike shops have a lot of winter indoor cycling programs: Human Zoom, Cadence and Breakaway Fitness are excellent resources. Join a gym for winter weight training. Hire a personal trainer who can take you to the next level.

Fun!

Do something fun that encourages play. We forget so often how to be a five year old

running free at recess. I plan on visiting family in Maine and entering a toboggan race. It is held in Camden Me every February and is even written up in Sports Illustrated. Do I know anything about toboggan racing? No! All I know is sledding, in the old days, down long hills at Valley Forge Park and hoping not to hit others as the snow flew into my eyes. This experience should be a blast. It will be fun, challenging, competition, effort and refreshing to do something I am not good at.

So there goes it...

”Off season” is a time for fun and relaxing workouts with the intention to improve and start strong in the spring for your next season. It is a time to cross train, do something new, go a little harder with weights but at the same time relax and rest the body and soul.

As for me, at my last writing I mentioned how I was a bit tired and did not do a half Ironman so as to train smart and be ready for two major races. ‘Walk your talk.’ I did and it paid off. I won my age group at Long Course Duathlon Nationals and then three weeks later took a bronze medal at Long Course Duathlon Worlds.

What is my mantra?

Moment!

Enjoy your next two months, live and play the moment, and refresh your spirit. Next article I will see what we need to do for some “mental training” as well as stepping up to a sharpening phase.

Annie Mitchell is a Philadelphia age group tri/duathlete. Mitchell runs the spin program and does personal training at The Aquatic and Fitness Center in Bala Cynwyd. Annie has competed from local to world level and is currently ranked 3rd in the nation and world 50-54 age group duathlete. She can be reached at amitchell@phillyfitmagazine.com.

