Art & Science of Triathlon
2014 International Coaching Symposium

A one-of-a-kind educational opportunity for triathlon coaches
Coaching Visually Impaired and Wheelchair Athletes

Presented by

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Bio

- USAT Level II
- USA Paratriathlon Head Coach since 2012
- Developed and ran all Challenged Athlete Foundation (CAF) Paratriathlon Camps since inception in 2010
- Ran all USA Paratriathlon High Performance Camps since inception
- Currently Coach 3 Team USA Paratriathlon members (including World Champion)
- Co-founder and Head Coach at Team MPI
- Work for Challenged Athletes Foundation (CAF)
Coaches currently coaching Wheelchair or Visually Impaired athletes?

...and what’s the date today?
Races for Paratriathletes

- Local Races
- USA Paratriathlon Events
  (Nationals, Regional Championships, etc.)
- ITU Paratriathlon
- Paralympics
- WTC and PC divisions
Paratriathlon Classification  
(USAT & ITU)

Sport Classes no “evidence-based classification system”

The five sport classes are as follows, “...through classification assessment...”

PT1 - Wheelchair users. Score of up to 640,0 points. Athletes must use a recumbent handcycle on the bike course and a racing wheelchair on the run segment.

PT2 - Score of up to 454,9 points. In both bike and run segments, amputee athletes may use approved prosthesis or other supportive devices.

PT3 - Score from 455,0 to 494,9 points. In both bike and run segments, the athlete may use approved prosthesis or other supportive devices.

PT4 - Score from 495,0 to 557,0 points included. In both bike and run segments, the athlete may use approved prosthesis or other supportive devices.

PT5 - Total or Partial visual Impairment (IBSA/IPC defined sub-classes B1, B2, and B3): One guide is mandatory throughout the race. Must ride a tandem during the bike segment.

[Website Link]

www.usatriathlon.org/audience/athlete-resources/paratriathletes/classification.aspx
Wheelchair Athletes (PT-1)

Who are they?
Required Equipment?
Wheelchair Athletes
(PT-1)

Considerations when training: SWIM

- Pool access (do they need a lift device?)
- Time to get to pool and in/out of pool (wetsuit, braces, wraps, etc.)
- Drills they can/can’t do
- Open water sessions
- What you would see on film?
Wheelchair Athletes (PT-1)

Considerations when training: Bike

- Different Levels of Handcycles
- A good fit is a MUST
- Hill training is different
- Indoor Trainers are good (i.e. SportCrafters)
- Group training with upright bikes is excellent
Considerations when training: Run

- Customized Racing Wheelchair is essential
- Proper technique
- Gloves for beginners, Hard Glove made from Aquaplast
- No real trainers on market (pic below)
- Need safe and flat areas to train
Wheelchair Athletes (PT-1)

Considerations when training: Transitions, Recovery, Nutrition

• Bricks are excellent and can be done anywhere
• Recovery
  • Injury prone areas are shoulders
  • Using arms constantly with every-day chair
• Nutrition
  • Dehydration very common (high sweat rate above lesion + avoid drinking due to inconvenience of toileting during training & racing)
  • Same nutritional requirements as able-bodied
Wheelchair Athletes (PT-1)

Considerations for RACING

- Is course good for wheelchairs?
  - Hills? Grade?
  - Grass/sand from water to transition? On Run Course?
  - Crowded and narrow run course (if so, race volunteer on bike?)
- Handlers available to assist?
Wheelchair Athletes (PT-1)

Considerations for TRAVEL

- Lots of GEAR!
- Bathroom considerations
- Accessible hotel rooms
- Transferring to new and different areas are hard over time
Visually Impaired (VI) Athletes (PT-5)

Who are they?
Required Equipment?
Visually Impaired (VI) Athletes (PT-5)

MOST important factor is a *compatible* Guide

- Personalities need to match
- Guide should be stronger in all 3 disciplines
- INDEPENDENCE varies
Visually Impaired (VI) Athletes (PT-5)

Considerations when training: SWIM

- Can they swim alone?
- How will they get to pool?
- Is there a large clock to read? If not, then MASTERS or Swim partner
- Drills they can/can’t do – can do them all!
  - Need to be instructed either on site or by video analysis
  - Proprioception is sometimes often skewed
- Open Water Sessions – need a guide
Visually Impaired (VI) Athletes (PT-5)

Considerations when training: Bike

- Good trainer is KEY. Any Bluetooth device that can give *speech output* to athlete is best (i.e. Wahoo Fitness Products)
- Tandem – a good fit, aero and light
- Skills on tandem essential: turning, standing up, accelerating, etc.
- Key is strong PILOT (Guide) and great communication
Visually Impaired (VI) Athletes (PT-5)

Considerations when training: Run

- Can athlete run on their own? Treadmill or track?
- Good speech output devices as tools
- For skill work, athletes need coach’s eyes for form improvement (or video)
- Running with Guide often can be beneficial
Visually Impaired (VI) Athletes (PT-5)

Considerations when training: Transitions

- Practice on own
- Practice extensively with Guide
- Both athlete and guide need to worry about themselves
Visually Impaired (VI) Athletes (PT-5)

Considerations for RACING & Travel

- No real issues with racing other than space in transition for tandem
- Traveling with LARGE tandem
- Expense of two people for one athlete
Coaching for both PT-1 & PT-5 athletes

• Flexible Training Plans
  • Guide availability for VI’s
  • Reliable transportation to/from training facilities
  • Wheelchair users susceptible to injuries, infections, may be on medication, etc.
  • Traveling takes it toll – especially for PT-1

• Accessibility of training program delivery
  • VI’s: Appropriate “readers” required. Some documents or webpages difficult for software to convert to speech output
  • Wheelchair users: no issues

• Training Tools appropriate for both (power, HR, pace, speed, etc.)
  Need to include RPE in everything
Coaching for both PT-1 & PT-5 athletes

• **Communication**
  • Expect to be more accessible
  • Honest feedback (wheelchair especially)
  • Phone call is usually better than text or emails for VI’s.

• **Technique** is KING
  • Wheelchair: get proper fit with proper equipment
  • VI’s: need hands-on feedback or continual video analysis

• **Racing**
  • Work with athletes to reach out to Race Directors (if not Nationals or ITU) to discuss course, special needs, handlers, etc.

• **Emotional & Psychological**
  • Help develop **INDEPENDENCE!**
Questions?