

# **Open water swimming tips from The Internet Swimming Coach**

## **The week before the race**

Make sure that you have the right equipment. Fit new goggles to ensure that they do not leak and to ensure a comfortable fit. Check older goggles for scratches that will lead to fogging. There is nothing worse than having to stop every few strokes to rinse your goggles in order to find your way. Make sure that your swim suit will be allowed. In RSA most open water swims will follow the FINA regulations. Allowed suits will have a FINA barcode and number on the back. You are not allowed to swim a non-triathlon open water race with a wetsuit.

In the 3 weeks leading up to the swim reduce your training distance by 75%, 50% and even to 25% per week to ensure that you are recovered and rested for your race.

## **On the race day**

Get to the venue at least an hour before your swim. This should give you enough time to survey the course and conditions and complete your pre-race preparations. The pre-race phase is broken into four parts:

- Physical preparation
- Psychological preparation
- Course familiarisation
- Warm-up

### **Physical prep**

Put your suit on and fix your chip to the correct ankle. Take your race number to the marker tent. They will mark your race number on your arm and leg and fix a strip around your wrist. The strip is marked with your race number and will be taken off by the officials at the finish.

Depending on the conditions decide which goggles to use. If you are using an old pair of goggles, a good tip is to take a small bottle of baby shampoo to the swimming event. Wash the inside lenses of your goggles with the shampoo shortly before the race. Rinse well – this should prevent your goggles from fogging up during most of the swim.

Do not forget to put on your sunscreen and don't forget your lips. Even during cloudy conditions you will spend enough time in the water may end up with nasty sunburn.

Keep warm and ensure that you are properly hydrated before your start the swim.

## **Psychological prep**

You did all the hard work and training leading to you being here. If you are really nervous remind yourself that your training went according to plan and that you are physically well prepared for the race. Make sure you know your CSS pace by heart. Use your imagination to swim through the race at this pace, around every buoy, keeping your stroke long and strong. This will turn your tension into confidence that will improve your swimming. Also remember that there will be life guards watching you at all times during your swim. They are trained to assist you if you raise your hand.

## **Course familiarisation**

Find the race course poster and study the course. You can also ask swimmers that have done previous races to explain the course to you. Remember that it might change from year to year. Note the number of buoys, you need to round, the direction of the swim will determine how you need to round the buoys (left or right shoulder) and the distances between buoys. Next position yourself at a vantage point that allows a good view of the race course. Try to select some landmarks on the shore in the direction of the swim. This could be a gazebo, unusual tree, building or a mountain top or kloof. It is much easier to see these prominent landmarks on sighting than finding the buoys to keep you on course specially if the conditions are not ideal.

## **Warm-up**

It is always a good idea to warm up before your swim. It does not have to be far – 300-400m would usually suffice. It also gives you the opportunity to feel the water temperature before the swim. The more experienced swimmers will be taking a warm up swim somewhere of to the side of the race. They will find the best place to wade into the water. Just follow suit. The warm up will help you to understand the water conditions and you can also test your goggles. Wrap up warm after the warm up and wait for the start of your race.

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