

Fitter and Faster Ep 15: Beginner's Guide to Tri

Welcome to Fitter and Faster. My name is Emma-Kate Lidbury, your host and managing editor here at Triathlete magazine. Each month on Fitter and Faster, we tackle one triathlon training topic in-depth, giving you everything you need to know. This month it's the beginner's guide to tri. Everything you need to get started in triathlon, from how to approach training, picking your first race, how to fuel well, prevent injuries, and plenty more after we've covered some of the basics.

We'll be chatting with author, nutritionist and coach Matt Fitzgerald about getting started with training as a newbie, as well as the basics of fueling for tri and some insights into injury prevention for those coming into the sport. We'll also be joined by coach Morgan Latimore, who has helped scores of beginners get the most from the sport. The people's coach, Morgan thrives on helping athletes get the most from themselves and achieving their potential. He's huge on mindset and has some great tips for athletes of all experience levels, so stay tuned for that. And of course it would not be Fitter and Faster without our gear section with our senior editor and resident gear guru, Chris Foster. He'll be joining us later to get you set up with all the gear you need when you're first starting out in this crazy sport.

All of that after this short break.

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So hopefully you know by now that triathlon involves swim, bike, and run—almost always in that order, but often different distances. Races range in distance from sprint through to Ironman, with a sprint distance race involving a 750 meter swim, a 12 mile or 20 K bike, and a three mile or 5k run. With the next step up being an Olympic distance race, which involves a 1500 meter swim, 25 mile ride, and a 6.1 mile or 10K run.

If you're going to step it up again, it's the half-Ironman distance or the 70.3 distance as it's known, that number referring to the total number of miles you cover in the race across swim, bike, and run, which is a 1.2 mile swim, 56 miles on the bike, and a half marathon or 13.1-mile run. And then of course, there's the biggie, the Ironman, the full distance, which is a 2.4 mile swim, 112 miles on the bike, and then a marathon run.

And it's the Ironman world championship held in Kona, Hawaii every year that most people think of when they think of Ironman.

So how does it all work? Well, the clock starts when the gun goes, and you'll swim, you'll exit the water, hit transition, also known as T1, where you'll literally transitioned from swim to bike.

You'll then head out on the bike. You ride, hit transition two—T2, where you transition from bike to run, and then it is full gas to the finish line. The clock doesn't stop throughout this entire time. So your transition times are included and you can of course change outfits as many times as you like. But most people opt to wear the same thing for the entire race. Usually a one piece tri suit or two piece.

We'll of course touch on that in our gear section later. Now most beginners are encouraged to start with a sprint or even shorter, maybe like a super sprint. Of course you don't have to, you can throw yourself in at the deep end with an ironman as your first race.

And while most coaches would advise against doing that, plenty of people still do. And of course, many people come into triathlon with experience in usually one or more of the three sports. For example, when a runner gets injured, they might take up cycling or swimming to stay fit. And before they know it, they're signing up for their first tri.

Of course, your experience and ability in each of the three sports will help shape how you approach your training. If you're someone who's been swimming since you're a kid, you might not need to spend as much time in the water as someone who is just learning to swim. Likewise, if you're a seasoned runner, you might decide to dedicate more training time to swimming and cycling when you first start out.

Now, Matt Fitzgerald is a guy who knows a thing or two about getting started in tri. He is a coach, nutritionist, and author of more than 20 books in the endurance space. So we're going to chat with Matt about how best to start out.

Okay. Matt Fitzgerald, welcome to Fitter and Faster. Thank you for joining us. How are you doing?

MF: Doin alright, It's great to be with you.

EK: Yeah. We know, obviously as an author and a coach and a nutritionist, you know a lot about triathlon and you're obviously a great resource for people who are just starting out in this sport.

And you've helped a lot of people who are just starting out in the sport. Do you want to tell us how long ago was it that you did your first triathlon?

MF: My first triathlon was ...boy coming up on 25 years ago, 1998. Yeah, I grew up as a runner and then decided to branch out into triathlons...I would have been in my late twenties then.

EK: Wow. Okay. So it's been a little while. You've probably amassed knowledge, in those 20 plus or nearly 30 books, you've written as there's plenty of knowledge in there. And so I know when you're starting out in triathlon, one of the things that people find quite overwhelming is managing the training, knowing where to start.

What's... how do you approach that with newcomers? What's your advice on starting out with triathlon training?

MF: Yeah. I think triathlon training is really only complex in the details. On the level of principles it's not all that complex. So yeah, it's three sports, but you want balance among the three. So whether you've come from a background in one of those three sports, or you're just coming in cold and maybe you're a high school basketball player, you want to train with about equal frequency in all three sports in terms of how much total time you devote to them. You can look at how time is

balanced in an actual triathlon race, where you would spend about half your time on the bike.

And so even though you might want to train with equal frequency, and say two swims, two rides, two runs a week. You should amass more time on the bike just because you're going to get more bang for the buck. And then, balanced swimming and running. And then the other thing in terms of that same principle of balance is intensities. Like the single most common mistake athletes make when they first start is doing everything unintentionally at a moderate intensity and what to avoid that mistake you, you want to follow what I call, well, I didn't invent it: the 80-20 principle, where 80% of your training is at a truly low intensity, and that's a conversational pace, and 20% you're really getting after it. And that 20%, it goes a long way. So if you'd like to go fast, you get to do that. But most people do an unconscious 50/50 thing, spending half their time in no man's land.

So it's balanced. Balance among the three disciplines and balance of training intensity. And you'll be off to a good start with that principle.

EK: Absolutely. Absolutely. And if somebody... with that in mind, though, if somebody is coming in as a runner, say, they've got, they're running with some history and background in that sport.

Is that something you'd still, would you advise them spending more time concentrating on swimming and biking? Or how does it, same with the cyclist or a swimmer coming in?

MF: Yeah, probably the second most common mistake that beginners make is, especially if they do come from a background in one of the three sports, they're actually focusing on the one they're already good at, because, you might think it would be the opposite.

I guess common sense would be you spend the most time in what you're worst at. I tend to, no matter what your background is, I tend to recommend that people balance their training the same way, regardless of their background, because you don't really want to get weak in your strong discipline.

You don't want to let it slide, but you do have some work to do in your weakest discipline. The exceptions can be periods when maybe you don't have a race on the horizon, and it could be a good time to focus on what you're not as good at. But generally when you're, when you have a race out there and you're trying to get ready for it, you want to be about equally well-prepared in all three disciplines. A one size fits all in that regard.

EK: Yeah. Yeah. And I'd say like a common pattern that you often see is that if you are a runner, for example, you, I think it's just human nature. It's just natural that you want to keep doing what you're good at and what you enjoy and what you have a history in.

Especially, and then if you, I think one thing particularly common for beginners is if you're new to swimming and learning how to swim, especially, somebody, if you're learning as an adult, that's something you do not want. It's not always like enjoyable, especially to start out with. So I think, it's very easy and you see that pattern a lot in triathletes, they bike and run a lot and they don't, they tend to

swim as like an afterthought if they've not come from that background. So yeah, it's something to be, I think it's a good blind spot to be aware of is that, you might have a natural tendency to do things you're good at the cost of others. Things that you kinda suck at, or you find hard, whatever.

MF: I think a helpful mindset for people, just keep in the forefront throughout the process is... You got into the sport for a reason. For me, like I was a terrible swimmer. I actually still am. But I would remind myself, I could have just kept running, like I chose to branch out. And so probably, there's something that everyone is intimidated by something that they feel, just like they don't measure up or even things you're afraid of.

I say embrace all that stuff. Like it actually, you're not lying to yourself. It's true that you, part of the reason you got into this sport was for those very challenges. So go ahead and embrace, the fears, the insecurities and all that as part of the adventure.

EK: Yeah, absolutely. That's very good advice. I think... Now obviously you have a background in nutrition and you've written many books about that. I know that the *Racing Weight* is one of the very popular books and nutrition and fueling is obviously a big part of any endurance sport. And of course, with triathlon the same thing.

So what would you consider to be some of the basics of fueling and nutrition when you're starting out? And in, in a sport that's can be very demanding and obviously has a big energy toll. What's some of the basics.

MF: Yeah. It's easy to overthink things, the diet and nutrition part. And I actually see that quite a lot. The basics really are, there's a tendency when we think sports nutrition, that's like supplements and ergogenic, it's no, it's not, it's breakfast, lunch and dinner, like

EK: Yeah. You can make it pretty simple if you want.

MF: Yeah. And it's important not to lose sight of that, that, health is the foundation of fitness, without health, you're not going to be fit very long if you ever get fit.

So just focus on a balanced, healthy diet. No need to reinvent the wheel here, and there's room for individuality. If you don't eat meat fine, you can make that work. If you're not a big fan of grains, you can make that work. But you generally want a balanced, broad, and inclusive diet based on unprocessed foods as much as possible.

The big mindset change that is important, especially for people who just, you know, they weren't athletes, or, their training volume or their training load is increasing as a result of becoming a triathlete is that in society at large we tend to be concerned about eating too much.

Oh, if I eat too much, I'll gain weight. In triathlon it's a lot more costly to not eat enough. So you want to be sure that you're getting enough to eat at all times. If you, everyone's concerned about, weight and how they look and all that, but forget all about that and focus on if you train right and you eat right and you make sure that you're well fueled for the training, cause they're synergistic, your weight will

end up where it's supposed to be. So yeah those are the most important principles with nutrition. Yeah.

EK: And obviously, like you say, fueling the training and the recovery, things like being mindful of eating, if you're going after a particularly hard or strenuous session or long session, making sure to recover well.

And being, I was about to say the recovery window, your refueling window, but then, we should probably explain that too. If somebody's starting out, then, it's always good to be mindful about taking on protein, in that sort of 20, 30 minutes after training and after racing.

Are there any other things like that, we, I think those of us in the sport maybe tend to assume or forget that it's not maybe not automatic knowledge, are there things like that, that you come across?

MF: Yeah. You need, you can broaden that, cause that recovery window has to do with timing.

And that's something that you're not used to, people are used to thinking of what they eat and how much they eat, but not so much about when. And when you're training a lot and it's particularly, if you have days when you're exercising twice in one day it's easy to fall behind. And there's research showing that even if you get enough to eat over a 24 hour period, if there are gaps in the day where you actually fall behind, where your energy needs get out ahead of the supply that you're giving your body through food, your metabolic rate will slow down.

You'll just, you'll actually adapt less to the training you're doing. So you sort of want to keep...the times of greatest energy need are first thing in the morning, cause you've been asleep and fasting overnight. And then as you say, after workouts, and also I, you know the whole workout window—just think of an envelope around your workouts, where you want to be properly fueled going into them.

And then you want to get some nutrition to accelerate the recovery process afterward as well.

EK: Yep. Absolutely. And like you say, it doesn't have to be supplements. Doesn't have to be sports nutrition. It can be, it's entirely possible to do that with real food, not, you know what we would... I was going to do air quotes, "normal food" without having to spend a fortune on gels and chews and bars and all the rest of it.

So yeah, it can be kept pretty simple on you. It can be very successful.

MF: Yeah, for sure. Yeah. You definitely want to do real food as much as possible. There's some people who go a little too far on the other side and it's important to keep in mind. If you go out for a three hour bike ride, it's going to, it's going to go a lot better if you take in some calories on the bike and those calories should not be broccoli.

Broccoli is very healthy, should probably be in your diet, the purpose of fueling workouts is not health, it's performance. So you can apply... all the rules change,

like when you're fueling during training. That's all the more reason. Cause if you train a lot, those Gatorade calories can add up.

And so you want to, you don't want to use supplements or, processed or packaged foods. You want to minimize that outside of when you actually really need to rely on those things.

EK: Yeah. So if you were going, if you are advising somebody who's going out on a three hour bike ride or two hour bike ride, it would be predominantly carbs, right?

MF: Yeah. Carbs, they've gotten a bad rap over the last, I don't know how many years now. The science says, carbs are basically what your muscles are running on. And you're burning fat too, try drinking a bunch of fat during a long bike --- actually don't, it's not going to go do that. So yeah. Even if you try to moderate your carbs, in your meals it, it is rocket fuel for endurance performance. So the time to take in carbs and not worry about their reputation is when you're training and racing.

EK: Yep. Yes. For sure. Yeah, absolutely. And so obviously, like you touched on there, you don't want to get into, you don't wanna get yourself into a hole with energy demand and requirements. And one of the, and one of the things that can happen, if that is the case you can get run down, you can get ill, you can get injured.

And obviously when you're taking up if you're taking up three new sports or even if you're just taking, if you're a runner and you're taking up two new sports, triathlon is a sport, which is obviously very demanding on the body and you do need to be mindful about injury and injury prevention.

What are some of the most common injuries that you think beginners should be aware of and be mindful of as they start their multi-sport journey?

MF: Yeah, by and large, at the population level injuries, what we call overuse injuries are more common in running, there's a higher injury rate in running due to the high impact nature of the sport.

However, if you've been a runner for a while and you're new to swimming and cycling, that might not hold true for you because, jumping ahead to injury prevention, the biggest thing you can do to minimize injury risk is what's called load management, which basically means don't try to take big leaps forward in your training, take the next step forward.

If you've run seven miles, don't try 14 yet. So yeah, we tend to, when we think of preventing injuries, I dunno, we think of, I don't know, ice baths or whatever, or like foam rollers or, but really load management is number one, just not giving your body more than it's ready for.

And if you have a background and in cycling, but not swimming and running, you're not used to any kind of load whatsoever in those sports. So you need to take it slow and also do, two steps forward, one step back. That's how process -- that's how progress looks in endurance sports training.

You apply stress to your body by giving it a little more than it's done in the past. Then you step back, take a day off or take out a lighter week of training and then take the next couple of steps forward. Yeah.

EK: Yeah. And what are some of the injuries that people people are commonly cursed with? I want to say, when they come in into triathlon, I know when I started out, I had plantar fasciitis in both feet in the first two years, it was like, just because I'd never done that much running before which is obviously an overused thing. Like you say what are some others that spring to mind?

MF: Yeah. Yeah. The number one site of injury in running is the knee. So you see a fair amount of knee stuff, depends a little bit on your running style. Lighter, faster, more advanced runners that tends to be around the hip and pelvis higher up. For heel strikers it can be the foot and the knee.

And yeah, there's a, I've had my share for running related injuries and there's a lot of them, but some are more common than others, that runner's knee or patellofemoral pain or IT band syndrome, which is close to the knee, but it's actually a soft tissue. Those are all common.

In, in cycling, you can get knee issues as well, in addition to low back and then in swimming it's tends to be the shoulder, scapular area, shoulder. Yep.

EK: Yeah. And obviously the best part about the best way to, to avoid injury is to look after your body well, in the first place. What does that look like in your opinion? Is that foam rolling? Is that mobility? Is that, what is, what does that look like for you and athletes that you work with?

MF: Yeah, the next thing I would put actually after after the load management is on the bike, making sure you're properly fit on your bike, that can make a huge difference.

And there's a whole science, when I first got into triathlon, not so much, just you buy a bike shop, it took a couple of quick and dirty measurements and you're off to the races. But having a professional fitting, it may seem like, oh, I'm just a beginner. I can't drop however much money on it.

It's worth it. Because there's a, yes, it really is. And then in swimming, swimming with proper technique, or, with better technique will not only help you swim more comfortably and faster, but it will also help reduce injury risk too. Spending some time working with a coach and you can do a lot of stuff remotely now, just, take a GoPro to the pool, have a friend film, you send it to one of the coaches that provides that service and that can help you improve more quickly and reduce injury risk.

But also yes. Out of, what their folks are calling musculoskeletal care is a big piece of it as well. And that's like functional strength training, not bodybuilding, but like strength training that, exercises that are, selected for the needs of people who swim bike and run.

It can just, it can help put your body a little bit more in balance. There's that balance concept again. And mobility work as well, where mobility is dynamic flexibility. It's just the ability to move efficiently through a normal range of

motion. That stuff, it can be people think, ah, how do I find time even to swim, bike and run? And now you're telling me I gotta do this other stuff. But it's worth it. And a little goes a long way. That's the good news. You can do a little, you know, what I call a corrective exercise routine. I have one and it's just like 20 minutes in the evening. I usually do it like while I'm catching up on the news in front of the television, I don't have to, I don't, I do it in my street clothes or my pajamas.

It doesn't feel like a workout out of the shower afterwards. It's just, it's actually relaxing. So if you're doing zero now, just start doing a little and that little bit will reward you.

EK: Yeah. I think that's a good, really good routine that a lot of athletes build into their, a lot of triathletes, whether the professional age group and everything in between building in like 15, 20 minutes, it doesn't maybe have to be every night, but something that is becomes habit and is a way for you to look after your body.

Cause I think also, yeah, like when you talk about functional strength there, I think something to be aware of when you are doing three sports, is that you do know, do need to build the foundation. You do need to have a body that's going to be able to withstand the miles you want to put through it. And with, without that.

It, although, like you say it is adding something else to already what seems like an already busy plate, but it's something that I think can be a little bit short-sighted to not do it, not to build it in. Yeah. But yeah, no, that's some very sound advice there, I think.

But so when it comes to beginners and beginnings that you you've worked with, what are some of the most common questions that you receive or you hear, and and how do you, and how do you answer?

MF: Yeah you've asked most of those questions, honestly but the diet one is pretty big, even though it's a sport people pretty go-- pivot pretty quickly to, what should I eat?

And so I, I, there I recommend treat the way you eat now as the starting point and just modify as necessary, because you want things to be sustainable. The training that the diet and everything else. Don't change anything more than necessary on the diet side. If you need to just up your game in terms of the quality of what you eat, do that, if you need to eat more, as you start to train more, do that but you don't have to throw away what you've been eating and start eating the triathlete's diet, just focus on tweak rather than overhaul.

A lot of equipment questions, I did my first triathlon on a borrowed bike that I it was a mountain bike and I hadn't even test ridden it before the race. And it turned out to have one working gear. It was actually had no functioning during-- [that sounds like fun.]

It was fun. I showed up at the race site without goggles, and I had to borrow goggles from another racer. You know what, like this is doable. It was an Olympic distance race. I survived and... When I was a kid and I started running, my dad was a runner and he was the one who inspired me to get into it.

And, I wanted shoes, even-- we're going to the mid eighties, but they had cool shoes back then. And my dad would not get me running shoes until I'd put in like a month of regular training. I had to earn the shoes and it could be equipment. You get what you pay for with the equipment and it can be an expensive sport.

And eventually if you get really into it, it can be worth making some investments, but don't feel any compulsion to start off, spending six grand on a bike or whatever on a wetsuit. Start with what you got, borrow something. And as long as it fits and it's safe, or what have you on the gear side, just baby steps.

EK: Yeah. Definitely. Because it is an expensive sport and there is a ton of gear that you need. Not that you need, you might like, but there are some basics. Yeah, we'll talk about that later in the show with Chris Foster, but yeah, there are some basic things that you do need to have, and if you don't want to buy them, you can, like you say, borrow them.

And so it sounds like your first race was quite an interesting one then I was cause my next to my final question was going to be to you things that you wish you'd known when you did your first race or things you wish you'd known when you were a rookie. So yeah. Tell us a little bit about that first race and maybe some share some advice that you wish you'd, you'd have.

MF: Yeah I actually have no regrets about that first race. I did. I didn't mention I was hung over. Yeah. Do, as I say, not as I do. But it's funny because like that race was kind of a humiliating experience because I almost finished dead last, and I'm this healthy 27 year old guy, like battling it out with actually the race director.

This is on the Island of St. Maarten. And the race director was over 70 and he was doing his own race and we ended up in a sprint to the finish and I think there was one or two people behind us, but not many. And look at me now. But in terms of like actual regrets, things I wish I could have back. I think a lot of runners and I was a runner first that they think that they can just replicate the formula that made them good at running in the water and swimming.

And you can't. Like for, I spent two years just trying to build fitness in the water and not respecting the importance of technique. And then when I finally broke down and hired a coach, Rock Frye, to help me with my technique, I seriously, I improved more in two weeks than I had in the previous two years.

And I just, I wish I had that insight earlier.

EK: Yeah that's really interesting actually, because swimming is the one that, where technique... I think you can get away with learning a lot on a bike by riding with others and mirroring what you're doing. If you're starting out and running I think we all have some basic idea of how to run it from being kids, but swimming, if you didn't learn, if you weren't taught technique as a kid, it's so hard to learn. So yeah, I think there is, there comes a time when it's really good to invest in that technical work in the pool.

And like you say, it goes a long way.

MK: Yeah. And that's the only that's broadening the broadening that concept, get help, ask people stuff there, there is a lot to learn and it's actually... that can be

intimidating. There's so much I don't know. But just asking, I still do that now as experienced as I am, I'm not an expert on everything.

So if I want to improve in some area, I go to a real expert and, have that sort of, it takes a village mentality.

EK: Yeah. For sure. That kind of growth mindset. And that was well, I think when I was starting out, that was definitely the thing that I really liked about the sport was the camaraderie around learning and sharing knowledge and something that now with 15 plus years experience doing the sport, it's something that I really enjoy going back.

But yeah, when I was a newbie, it was all, I was just constantly asking questions and try and learn, I feel like you become a bit of a triathlon sponge, just trying to soak up all this, it feels like there's so much to learn. There is so much to learn.

And yeah, you can constantly ask people questions and what I liked about the sport, and I think the same rings true now was, back then, as to now is that, you can ask people at anything and people are always really happy to help you. Because everybody, and like you say, everybody knows something ... everybody's areas of special specialty or expertise are different, so yeah.

MF: Yeah. And it happens sooner than you think that you're the one dispensing advice to other people. Seriously, you don't have to be in the sport very long before... You'd be amazed how much you've learned. And then you're the one answering questions for other people and you're, you are paying it back.

EK: Yeah. That's very true. Very true. A good way to look at it, actually. Yeah. Cool. Cool. Thank you so much for joining us, Matt, really appreciate your insights and expertise and I'm sure that lots of people will be tapping into your books as they begin their begin their triathlon journey too. So you'll, if you haven't read one of Matt's books already, then I would strongly advise you to do yes, but yeah.

Thanks, Matt. Thanks.

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So coach Morgan Latimore has helped welcome plenty of newcomers into triathlon. As both an adult learn to swim coach and as a tri coach, he has a ton of useful tips on getting started. Here's our chat with Morgan.

EK: Coach Morgan Latimore. Thank you so much for joining us. How are you doing today?

ML: I am doing amazing as always. I'm a little bit amazingly tired after my swim today, but you know what? We've still got a lot of things to do a lot of people to motivate and, gotta get some nutrition, maybe watch a TV show or two and keep it moving.

EK: Keep it moving. I like it. Yeah. Yeah. And you are keeping it moving. Cause we were just talking before we came on air. We're talking about all the things you've got going on at the moment and you're a swim coach. You're a triathlon coach. You're a Marine. You're a public speaker. You're writing a book.

You've also training for ultra. You've done some ultra man races, and you're training for the Epic Decker. So tell us what that, that's a whole lot of stuff anyway, but the Epic Deca! That sounds. That sounds crazy. Tell us what that's all about.

ML: I think like it's all a lot of stuff, but I think it's all in the same thing.

It's like really, testing our limits as we do as triathletes. And that's how I got to DECA. You start off at the sprint and you start off at the 5k and then you're like, ah, let me, what's this triathlon thing? You try that out. You go sprint, Olympic, half, full. And then, after I did a couple of fulls, I was like, I'm not a person that likes to repeat races.

And so I was like, what's next? And then a friend came to me. He came to me in San Diego and said, hey, have you ever heard of ultra man? I was like, I have, but they would never select me because of the selection Brandon it's 50 athletes each year to actually participate in each race.

Depends on if it's Canada, Florida, Arizona, or Hawaii. And I was trying to get him to one in Florida. He said, put an application in what the what's, the worst can happen. You don't get in. I think the application fee was \$35. So I left that day. I didn't think nothing about it. Cause I was like, he crazy, I don't win nothing.

I just don't, I don't get nothing. So I'm not doing it. And then I gave him, he said, so did you sign up? And he came back to me. I was like, God, dang, this dude won't leave me alone. And so I went home, I signed up and I was like a crew and kind of crewing my wife for her Ragnar. And then I got an email and it says, can we have a little bit more information about you?

And I was like, what do you want to know? He's if you were a race director, what would you want to know to let somebody in your race? And I, so I just, I wrote this long message on my cell phone and then I went home and then I woke up the next day, it said you have been chosen to for 2018 Ultra Man, Florida.

I was like, how much does this even cost? I hadn't even did any research or anything, but I was looking for something more and I did that. And the Ultra community is just awesome. And so I kept, was I got involved with that and some other things happened and Epic Deca came into play and they were like, Hey, do you want to do it?

When I was like this costs a lot of money and say, do you want to do it? I say, yes, I do. And the rest is, we've been trying to do it for two years now almost cause it was a pandemic and we just moved again to may 2022. And we'll do you know, 10 Ironman in 10 consecutive days on six different islands.

EK: Wow.

ML: Yeah. So we had the legitimate, the logistics is what's the hard part, like I was just telling somebody before I got on here and was like, you should go do two iron man or three iron man. I was like I said, I went from the high school to the world's baddest fighting force in the world.

And I said, just because you haven't done something like the first thing under that, or somebody else says you need to do something else doesn't mean you just can't.

As long as you prepare, you can do anything. And I need to do things that scare me and three iron man don't scare me.

I'm sorry ... just I'm that guy. But 10, 10 scares the hell out of me actually .

EK: Okay. Before we scare beginners, listening to this with Talk of 10 Ironman, man, let's start out simple, keep it simple. Cause obviously, as a coach you help athletes. And one of the things that you really enjoy doing is helping athletes get the most from themselves and achieve their potential, fulfill their potential.

How do you help when people first pick up the sport, when people first come into triathlon, how do you help them get started? And what's your advice for people who were coming into the sport from maybe like maybe from running or maybe from something completely different.

I, I ask them, why you doing it? Why do you want to do it? And they're like I want to complete this distance or I want to make this PR. I said, nah, that's not what I'm asking you. I'm asking you why emotionally. Do you want to do this? What is your purpose? Because when it gets hard, when you want to cuss me out during a workout, when you want to quit, you need to be able to go back to that reason.

And I've tried to talk to them and get deeper down and say and you can get to things where it could have been something with the mother or the father, or, setting that example for their children or overcoming a disease or something like that. And living their life to the fullest, not just existing.

And I think that is what kind of really connects me with my, especially the newer athletes, because most people in your life really don't care about you at that level. They don't ask those deep questions, but I think that's not only does it set you apart from other athletes, I think it's the one thing that we don't talk about enough, but it prepares new athletes for the challenges ahead.

EK: Figuring out why they're there, why they want to come, why they're doing it. Yeah.

ML: Because anybody can give you the workouts, but they can't do them for you.

EK: Yeah. You got to get out of bed. You've got to get out. You got to. Yeah. Yeah. And what what are the common reasons why, what do you think, what do you think it is?

What's the secret? What's the answer?

ML: I mean it can be a lot. I've met people that they were told their whole life that they weren't good enough. And so they are trying to live up... sometimes they don't know it, but they're trying to prove something wrong, prove someone wrong when, and in hindsight they should just be, showing themselves that they are enough.

Or a big one is when it comes to health, like I, I've been sitting on the couch or I've been doing nothing for most of my life. And this is something where I see they have comradery. It looks fun and people talk about it and I want to try it. And the first thing they say, I want to do an Ironman, they really saying, I want to do a sprint sometimes.

And so they are just looking for that emotional connection that has held them back their whole lives. And they're trying to fight through that because it's triathlon is not just about finishing the race. It's about getting the courage to do something that you haven't done to accomplish what most things, what most people will feel that it's impossible.

And that effort that was key, in accomplishing that goal as you know, really transcends triathlon for them and for those people. So there's a thousand reasons we can go down a whole list, but I think those are the, probably the biggest ones.

EK: Yeah. Yeah. And you talked that, you mentioned that you could, you can start with a sprint, you can start with an Ironman.

And obviously the, I would imagine most coaches obviously advise their athletes to start small and and grow the distance. But what's your take on that? Do you, when you've got somebody doing their first race, like, how do you help them pick the right race? Or how do you help them pick the right distance?

ML: I think, it depends like, cause sometimes you get, when you get new athletes, they already done signed up for something. Like I got a new one, right? Like I got her two weeks ago. She's never done a triathlon before I said, so tell me about your race.

And I'm thinking, she's going to tell me sprint. She says well I signed up for Olympic and I say, oh, okay. And I'm with it. Cause I do crazy stuff myself. So I'm with it. But let me say, let me explain to you what you need to be able to do. And she's like, oh, I didn't... Cause they don't know. They don't understand the concepts of distance yet.

And I said we have the key is, and I'll tell you just like I told this other guy on his messenger I just talked to, it doesn't matter how long you want to go. I don't care what for me, if you want to go do iron man your first time around, you just need to put enough time and effort into not only preparation... But enough time out from it that you can actually prepare for it, to not. And not just like the training, but instead of waiting six months before your first full and you've never done a race, then you probably should two years out. There should be a, and then you, for me as a coach, I'll slowly build in like shorter races within training or say, Hey, let's go do this sprint.

And, give them those pieces that you can only learn while racing. You know what I mean? So it's just, you just gotta do that Jedi mind trick on 'em. Oh, y'all want to do an iron man. I said, Oh yeah, let's do it. Let's train you for it. And then two months in you're like, yo let's try this race out and we can practice your transitioning and they leave with that.

EK: Yeah. Starting out. My first race was a sprint and the thought of starting out with an iron man seems to me to be terrifying, but I know like a lot of people just like jumping in and being like, I'm in, I'm going all in. But yeah, you're right. If that's, if somebody is listening and they're like jumping in straight into an iron man, first thing I think that's solid advice from you there is to build in some smaller races before you, if you can, obviously we're living in a different, we're living in a different world. We're talking as if we're back to normal, [but yeah, we go, we get

there.] And what about when it comes to coaching? I know we're talking about offline, were talking a bit earlier about how to find the right coach and how to even know if you need a coach. Like for people who are listening. What's the, what's your advice there on finding-- Does every triathlete need a coach and and how do you find them and how do you find, how do you even know the right one to find.

ML: I'll kinda answer that. I'll say everybody needs someone. I'll say it that way. Coaches, mentor, training buddy, or something like that. Do you need a coach? No. I think a coach is very valuable. Obviously I am a coach and I, for me, I need a coach. I liked that interaction and there are certain things that I need from a coach.

And as I help people, especially even if they're not looking for me or I can tell that athlete is not for me, I can say, okay, I do this. If you look at some of the most important thing, cause I'm a more holistic kind of coach in the beginning, like I want, cause you have to have a connection.

Like you can't, you've been coached before. If you don't have nothing in common with your coach, it's hard to speak the language. Like they don't get you and it's like you feel, and that kind of like alienates either one of you. And I don't know how to do this. I don't know how to ask.

And people don't know how valuable that piece is. So I tell him like, what are the top three things that are most valuable to you? Traits in a relationship. He says, honesty. Is it communication? Is it humor? Is it openness? What is that? Then? Whatever those top three are, first, does your coach have that?

Are you able to get humor or was he just like a a dry talker or was he, did you see, I feel like y'all were communicating effectively or did you not even understand how he was communicating with you? If I'm just like I'm learning and it's this super data driven guy and I don't care nothing about that.

He's talking another language. I gotta be gushy[?] I need to be comfortable with him. So he, maybe he's not the coach for me. And so it's finding those three things and really asking yourself "can I find a coach" cause you can, but are you have to work through those things. And then you go on to the accolades and education and experience and things like that, that need to exist.

I like to believe that you don't have to always have certifications, but I believe that the certification for coaching is a stepping stone in the right direction. If they never done it, then you should never talk to them because they don't think education is important. How many books are they reading?

How often are they're studying and honing their craft, that's important for you because there are a lot of courses that I've been doing for 20 years, but 20 years of old knowledge is still bad knowledge. But if you're doing 20 years and you're constantly upgrading and refining your skills and you're crafting your knowledge, then you can bring something valuable to your athletes, I think.

EK: Yeah. Yeah. And obviously nowadays, obviously there's a lot of coaching online and there's still some, there's still obviously some coaching in real life and it's

where you can see your athletes eye to eye and you can see exactly how they're performing. Do you have any preference there or advice for people there?

Is it, obviously a lot of it can be geography and what's available to you where you live, but...

ML: I think there's two pieces to it. It's for most people, if I, I don't agree with it wholeheartedly that the people should use these two things, but one is cost. And then two is the biggest piece of that... Obviously with coaching is somebody being able to handle age grouper schedule, not everybody is a pro and be like, this is my full-time job type thing. It's about it's meet them at where they are, what's their professional life look like? What is their marriage and or their health look like?

And cause you have to consider those things. So I think those are the biggest things that stand out is the cost. And is the coach fluid? Not flexible, not balanced, but is he fluid? Is he able to move with your schedule when the kids get sick or is he, does he tell you, figure it out, right?

Yeah. That's not a good coach, right? You might as well have a free training plan and that's what you're gonna get.

EK: And because that is something that's really important to remember, especially if you're starting out in a sport, is that you do have to, you can't be a slave to the plan. You do have to be fluid.

You do have to be able to, or I'm going to say the cliché, but listen to your body, learn to like tune into what's feel what feels good, what feels right. And not be afraid to, not be afraid to tell your coach or ask questions or, if something's not working or whatever.

But we have, which kind of leads me onto what I was going to. The next question was going to ask you was about the mental side of everything. I know that's something that's really important to you is working with athletes and the building confidence and tapping into, as you'd already talked about their why, their motivation, but mindset is a big thing that you're super passionate about.

So talk to us a little bit about how what are common sort of barriers, mental barriers that in athletes and what things that are really important for athletes to be aware of as they're coming into triathlon.

ML: Baggage. You try... you already heard that we run them from, are we running from or we running towards something?

You hear that probably a lot in the sport because a lot of alpha mentality ADHD, ADD athletes, like everybody's had, so and our emotions are out of control. So we looking for, it's almost like that drug to numb them, or we, or are we trying to get away from the things that are, that scare us the most?

And we go find our refuge and triathlon. Self-confidence, self-belief is the biggest one. And every athlete, even the males, right? It's that imposter syndrome and I do this, am I in the right place? Should I be doing this? And people don't understand how much that holds you back because you tell that story to yourself over and over again.

So when things do get hard, you're going to question your abilities. And I, what I try to do is change that narrative and teach athletes to actually speak what they want to happen in their life. This was a learning experience. Maybe it went the way I wanted to go, but this is what I got from it.

And not look at the negative all the time. Look how far you've come and look at what you've learned and implement that. Does that kind of lessen the blow sometimes? No, but it puts your life and your training in perspective, because if everything you do sucks, I would ask the question, why are you doing it?

And so this is supposed to be fun. And that's what, especially for new triathletes, the biggest thing I'll tell you, the biggest advice I'll ever give you is if this ain't fun, you should stop doing it. This is supposed to be an addition to your life. That brings value joy and happiness.

And when it stops being that you need to reevaluate what you're doing and you should use that day and advice with anything in your life actually. So yeah.

EK: Yeah. That sounds, yeah. I think it was yeah, when we're on the phone before and you were talking about The triathlon and life lessons you learn, or the lessons that you help athletes with in triathlon, carry over, transcend into real life.

As you, and that's something that you were super into as well as thinking about not just people as, not just somebody as an athlete, but what makes them tick as a person. And I guess that's something that when you're coming into it, I guess it's all tied in, when you're coming into the sport, you've got to think out, think about why are you doing this?

What's your why? What's your, what are you working on here? And yeah. And keep, obviously keep enjoying it. And if you're not enjoying it, then maybe reassess, but yeah. So what are some of the common questions that you get when people are first starting out? Because I know that there's, that's the thing about triathlon, and we're talking about that was talking about this with Matt Fitzgerald early in the show. Yeah. The questions and asking questions is a really big part of triathlon. And it's a really big part of learning regardless of whether you're doing triathlon or whatever, but yeah. What are the big questions?

ML: I think questions go both ways. And I would at first I'll answer the question about what they asked and then I'll tell you about how I implement the questions as well, is nutrition, pacing, equipment, right? These are the things that they talk about the most. These are the the conundrums that are calls throughout training because there's so much information and variation of different things.

Like they're looking for somebody, a new athlete is looking for somebody to vet that information, because you can read magazines, or you got your, what I call your social media coaching. You put it in a chat room and then you've got 150 replies. And you're like, okay, I'm still lost.

EK: There's a lot of noise out there so you to know what to listen to.

ML: Yeah. Yeah. So I think as a coach, you the key is to...Not only that you want them to ask the questions and they ask those specific questions because those are more, most common. And those are the most common addressed in like magazines

and podcasts and articles on Facebook or Instagram or whatever you, you put it out there. But so they ask you like, Oh man, okay, I've seen this already. I heard a friend talk about it. So they're asking you like, what about this? What about that? So I don't say, I want to say I combat that, but I follow that with, if you asked me what pace should I be running,

I would ask you what paces exist. And they say I don't know. I said you know how to use something relatable? So what is walking slow? And then they explain that to you. So what is walking fast? Then they explain that to you. And I said, so what is in between? They said, moderate.

I said, I want you to look at your running pacing and your cycling pacing just the same. We want, we need to set the parameters of what's slow, what's fast and what's in the middle. And so when you develop those skills and we practice them over and over again, they become second nature. And now instead of them, you telling them and they just run it off with it.

You have engaged their mind to actually question what they're doing to evaluate it. So what I, and I do that because on race day, I won't be there. So if I'm not teaching you, then what am I doing? And so my job is to actually feel the tools in your toolbox. So when when you like mile 50 of your Ironman and you're like, what do I do?

You ask yourself questions okay, what do I need to do? What I haven't done. So it's that ingrained in that process in their minds to make them proactive, not reactive.

EK: Yeah. Yeah, no, that's really good advice, I think. Yeah, because athletes who have become too dependent on their coach or, what are you learning? Where are you? Where's the education? And like you say, on race day, you have nobody else with you other than you. Yeah. No that's solid advice for sure. Yeah. What are some other common questions that you might get hit with?

ML: I think the bigger ones especially we talk again, we were talking about new triathletes, right? Is equipment huge, because there's a basic need for certain things. You need a bike, you need shoes, you need a helmet. And and I would even venture to say that, this is in the new age, you need to lease a multi-sport watch, something of some kind to get these things done.

It's even me taking the time to pull up multiple nutrition or pull up multiple bikes or pull up multiple pairs of shoes and say, okay, this is what look pedals are. This is what speed play pedals are. And showing them the difference and then almost regurgitating the product review to them so they can understand, okay, now you have to make a choice.

And then most of them would say you tell me, coach, cause they just want you to tell them. I said, no, we're not going to do that because I don't have to ride this and I don't have to do this. So then I asked more questions is okay, what's your budget, do you have any limitations or anything like that?

Are you able to get a bike fit it? So you you want, you do the same thing that you would do for yourself, but you do it for somebody else and say, okay, based off the information I have, this may be better suited for you and a big one that everybody

goes into is the power meter thing. And that's a really been a common question in the last, probably six months.

Like I need a power meter coach. Do I need a power meter? Do you like...why do you need it? I heard that, so you get back down to that one and it's let's worry about this first. Let's worry about get you on your bike on a regular basis before we buy your power meter, it's 500 to \$5,000 or something.

EK: Yeah. For sure. Yeah. And I know that you're a swim coach or you're an adult learn to swim coach. And so beginners, people who are new to swimming, I that's, I think that's something that's so scary. It can be so intimidating if you're learning to swim as an adult. So yeah. Tell us, talk to us a little bit about what you do there with learning to swim and teach it and how, if somebody is coming into triathlon as a rookie swimmer how do you help them?

What's the best, what's your best advice?

ML: Practice, consistency. Getting in the water before race day, a lot of people see, they say oh, I'm not a good swimmer, but then you ask the question, when's the last time you went to the pool, and so it's not like. I got the shirt on... change doesn't happen until action takes place. You can't come become a better swimmer if you don't swim. So have you, do you have a pool membership? It's giving them, it's giving them the thought to let's get access to the pool. Let's actually get you in the water and in a new swimmer...And if they say, oh, I am happy to swim in a while. I may just say, Hey, go to the pool for 30 minutes and just get in the water. Blow bubbles or something like, let's build a relationship with the water and make it positive. Not just storm directly in and say figure it out. Nah.

It's just like anything else before you get in the hot tub, you'd put your toes in. If it ain't right, you don't put it in. You put a little more cold water. So you want to make sure that you use that process. When you're dealing with, new swimmers, they might not be scared in this level, but you want to make sure you ease them into the process.

And the sooner you start doing that, then the sooner that you can get into the real nitty gritty stuff. The second piece of the dirt on the swim program, rich, really a valuable pieces. When we teach fearful swimmers, people that have been bit by sharks had bad drowning experiences... watch their parents or kids drown.

Like you deal with those people. People that won't take showers that won't take baths, it all gets deep or won't come onto the pool deck because the water's there, you have some really deep seated fear. So cause I'm really deep into mindset is real conversation with them.

And I would tell anybody, especially to people listening to this, if you're afraid, if you think you're afraid of the water, that's not what you're afraid of. That's not it. Cause if you look at any experience of drowning, something happened, a shark, like you have to reverse engineer that, okay, were you supposed to be there?

Where are they supposed to be there? Did they already knew that they shouldn't be doing this? Were they prepared to be in open water? It's usually not the water and caused the issue. But as the, usually the water that gets the bad rap. And so it's addressing the actual issue. And then it's okay, my son drowned.

Okay. So what happened? He was alone. He was this, he was with a friend. They shouldn't have been there. Like I've heard all the stuff. So the water is not the issue. It's not your enemy. How can you be safer around the water? And that's having the skills and knowledge to... To know that you can be comfortable by doing these techniques a, B and C, and then that you change the relationship of how they perceive water and you changed their relationship of if they were, are afraid or ready to get in there and just whip it all, that's the short answer.

EK: Yeah. No, there's a lot there, that's a whole podcast in itself, I think, but, yeah. But I know that for many new triathletes, like the learning to swim part of it or learning how to swim faster or more efficiently is that is definitely the barrier to entry or it's, I've had that conversation with a lot of people who can bike and run fantastically, and then they're just like, no, I wouldn't do a triathlon because I can't swim or don't want to swim.

ML: I want to --and talking about the speed, right. And that's another one I have a new another young lady that she's been with me about a few months now. And she wants to swim faster. But people don't see swimming as the strength. And when it comes to strength, you have to build that, you just don't get strength. It's not oh and it's repeated repetition, spend a lot of time in a water, drills, dry land training and all those types of things. But speed is not something within and I say this to people, if you're looking for speed overnight in the water that ain't going to work, it takes time.

You have to be patient. If you're comparing yourself to somebody where they are, you don't need you to look about and ask them where they come from. And they may have been doing it for a long time. They may have put it in a lot of work and you got to do the exact same thing yourself.

EK: Yeah. I think that's definitely a key word there is patience, for people, but people are coming in, nothing's going to happen overnight and endurance sports triathlon, especially that's I think that's so true. Like patience is key and trusting in the process and yeah, you gotta be consistent.

You got to show up every day and you gotta do the work. But which, you already know, but tell us about your first race and and how that went. Yeah, go on, entertain us.

ML: She hit me with a left field! My first--oh my goodness. And my first race was, oh, I don't know what the hell I was thinking. I was in in Cali. I was stationed on Camp Pendleton and they'd have a race there. That's called Semper Tri, it's a sprint. And I have been doing a little run, Marines run... I was riding my bike with the group and I had done that. Not really a lot of swimming.

I was in the pool, but I was swimming like three thirties, one hundreds or something. It was something terrible. And we swim in this place called L let's think it's, I think it's like L-CAC, this, the L-CAP area where the hovercrafts are. It's like a little beach there, but it's right next to up.

Not too far from Trestles. If people know Trestles is one of the top surfing places in the world. And so when we say that, that means waves and currents, right? The

bigger the waves, the faster the current, the stroke of the current. And so these are things that I was not prepared for.

And I woke up one morning. I was like, you know what, I was using, I went to use the bathroom and I came back with my wife. I said, I'm gonna go try to do this trial. I hadn't even signed up nothing. I just got my stuff, put it in the car and drove to it. And it was on base. So it was about 10 minutes away. So I was like, I'm just going to go try it out.

What the hell? So signed up, got in there. It was crazy because I remember this lady helping me zip my wetsuit up. I couldn't get my wetsuit zipped up. And she was like, hey, you want me to help you with that? In this accent. And I learned later on, it was Paula Newby-Fraser and we actually became friends...like she's the reason I'm in triathlon. But she was there to help me. And then we got to the start line And that swim, cause you had to swim almost like at a, like an, almost a 90 to 45 degree angle just to go straight. You swimming towards Mexico when you really you're trying to go towards LA, just so you don't get knocked off course.

And the waves are strong. And I hadn't had the open water skills that I have today at all. It was a 500 meter or yard swim. You go out and make a right, another right. And you come back in and those are doable, open water. Yeah. Once you fight through the ways to get out, okay, now you gotta deal with that on the way back, but you're not really, you can't really see them, not if you don't have the techniques to like, I'm gonna look back or you can feel as you get better at it you'll know the swell is coming.

You can just feel it when the water is moving. And so yeah, it beat the mess out of me. It beat me so bad that I sat in transition for five minutes. I sat in transition for like five minutes. And during that time I ate, I think I like a full meal almost. And then I put my towel around me, took my swim stuff off and then put on my bike kit.

Yeah. This is how bad it was. And then I got on the bike, I got on a bike and rode it and my legs were on fire. Cause I went out there like a bat out of--. I built up all this lactic acid that I couldn't flush out because I didn't ease into it. I just hammered it. And my body was like, what are you doing?

And I was like, pedaling hard as I could going nowhere. I came back and transition was long again. I did. I had the night before I had we're looking for some insole, some blue, some Superfeet blue insoles. They didn't have any, so you know what I did, I bought the black ones. The black ones are harder, and more sturdy. So my feet were burning. My arches were hurting. My, I had blisters. That was the most painful three miles I have ever ran in my life. And then I finished and I said, what everyone else says, I'm never doing that again.

EK: You say that, and then here we are. Yes, I did. I went on to do that year went from a sprint to Olympic.

I did the Olympic down in Super Seal. And then I did a Oceanside 70.3 and I did Environment Full all in that six months.

EK: That's quite... It's quite debut season then. Wow. That's fine. So you knew what was going to ask you was like, what'd you wish you'd known when you did your first

one, what'd if you could go back in time, what do [00:57:00] you wish you'd known? But I think we can answer that straight away, but you could say, I wish I'd had some open water swimming.

I wish I'd had some pacing experience. I wish I had done some transitions. I wish I'd. Yeah. You tell me, I don't want to answer the question for you, but yeah. All that. And I think the biggest piece of that is, is don't let your ego...drive you, especially-- I talked to males, I'm a Marine and I, I just thought I'm an amphibious monster.

I can do whatever in the water and all these other things. And I train hard and that's all ego, that's all pride. The biggest thing I would say to anybody new, old, like you don't have it all, you don't have all the knowledge, ask questions, read do the work and put in the work.

Because it's easy you can--Yeah. I'm one of the people that are fit enough to, I can almost fake anything. I can, I don't have to really go all out and I can make it through it. Step Ironman and above. But I think that it really, if you do it right, if you ask questions, you train consistently and you listen to your body, like you said before, it creates a more positive experience and it brings you back happier and healthier.

And then you state that it creates longevity in the sport and in your health. I think that's important.

EK: Yeah, for sure. Yeah. I think that's, yeah, that's some sound advice and definitely, always. Everybody seems to always have a fun story about their first one, but then there are some also serious like takeaways from that you could be like, ah, yeah, I would definitely do that differently.

I would definitely make sure that I know that I've been fit on my bike or I know that my run shoes, although I know it's not the first time I've run in my run shoes or whatever it is, but yeah, there's, it's always funny after the fact, but maybe a bit painful at the time.

ML: Then a bit--. It was a whole lot of bits.

I didn't touch my bike for two weeks. I didn't touch it. I didn't go to work out. I was just, my pride was damaged. It was like everything hurt.

EK: Well, Morgan, thank you so much for joining us today. We really appreciate your insights and your humor and your honesty. And we look forward to chatting to you again soon.

ML: Yes, I appreciate you letting me come on here. And everybody make sure that you do the right thing by being yourself, having fun and keep moving forward because forward is a pace.

EK: Awesome. Thank you. If you're enjoying the show, please, don't forget to subscribe to Triathlete: Fitter and Faster wherever you listen to your podcasts. If you like what you hear, rate and review us as it helps us out. And it helps others like you to find us

Next up, we're joined by Chris foster, our senior editor, and , who's going to talk us through what you need and equally as important, what you don't when you're first starting out in triathlon. Hey, Chris foster, the gear guru who is in the house. How you doing Chris?

CF: I'm good, Emma-Kate, How you doing?

EK: Pretty good. Thank you. So today we're going to be talking all about beginners specifically, obviously beginner's gear and I know you've obviously tested your fair share of stuff.

But before you were working at Triathlete magazine, you were actually working hard in bike shops right? In the LA area.

CF: Yeah! So when I first got out of college, I packed up all my stuff and my station wagon and drove out West. Yeah, just like so many people do. And I wanted to be a pro triathlete, but as you know being a pro triathlete is not glamorous, so I had to get a j-o-b.

But so anyway, I thought, I'll get a bike, a job at a bike shop. That way I can make connections and learn more about the sport and all that stuff. So it wasn't just, delivering pizzas, which I have done also.

So I'm not cutting anyone who delivers pizzas, but it had some points. So anyway I worked at bike shops while I was training to be a pro for years and years. I worked at Helen Cycles in Santa Monica, which is at the time, one of the most like high volume bike shops in the country. And so we just, you're just selling you're like a selling machine.

So you talk to beginners all the time and all sorts of people, obviously road/ mountain too. But then from there I went to triathlon lab in Redondo beach and that was just a tri shop, which was like, awesome. As a triathlete, if you're not selling mountain bikes, you're not selling downhill bikes, you're not messing with any of that stuff.

And I worked at sales there and then I worked as a mechanic for awhile. So I kinda got to, to not only sell things and help a lot of beginners, but when it breaks, I'd have to deal with it. So I'm not trying to sell someone a piece of garbage because I'm going to be the one who's back there, tinkering with it.

But it was a great job and it helped me like, learn more about the sport, learn more about beginners. We can talk to our readers who are beginners. I wasn't pro triathlete for a long time, but I've actually dealt with, hundreds of beginners in their first gear purchases.

So, a little bit of experience with that. But the one thing, one of the things that tri lab had, and I don't, honestly, I don't know if they still have it. They had this tri starter kit, which was like brilliant. It was around a thousand dollars at the time if they still have it, I'm sure it's probably gone up a little bit.

But you would get like an inexpensive road bike, water bottle, cage, sleeveless wetsuit, tri kit, helmet, goggles, cap, race number, belts, body glide, transition bag. Like you get-- you could go to the starting line with this kit. Yeah. It was

awesome. It was just such a-- just “come on in and, we’ll take you through the sizing!” and and all that stuff.

So as a salesperson, it was super easy because, you don't have to piece everything together. And I think a lot of people, a lot of beginners, like if you're listening to this, you're probably a beginner. You hear that triathlon is just this expensive sport and it is, it can be a very expensive sport.

And I'm not trying to minimize like a thousand dollars is not nothing. And of course there's race entry fees and things like that, too. But the thing that shocked a lot of the customers I had that came in were oh, I thought the first thing, my favorite thing is a salesperson was, I'm not a professional.

I don't need a \$10,000 bike. And, as a salesperson, you're always like, I didn't think you were a professional, first of all, no offense. [we're already three minutes into the gear section and Chris is cutting it] or taking burns on people! I know what they were saying. I know they weren't implying that they were professional.

I think they were just trying to, get a little bit of an icebreaker kind of thing. Yeah. But, there was some truth to it. They believe everyone is so fast. We see Iron Man. We see Hawaii Ironman championships. We see these amazing bikes and these pros on them and, it's got to cost a fortune and yes, that stuff does cost a fortune.

I reviewed tons of \$10,000 bikes and above in the last 12 months and people buy them and it's, and they're awesome. But for sure you don't need that to do your first tri or your fourth tri.

EK: Right. And I think it just gets, it can be at, for a newcomer. It can be overwhelming just like the sheer volume of kit and equipment and gear that you need.

And just knowing what is knowing what's absolutely essential in order to do your first try and knowing what's like peripheral and maybe could come along, that can be introduced at a later date. Like for example, when I first started, I, this is, I'm not sure I should admit this publicly, but I had on my nightstand next to my bed when I was a beginner, I had a little wishlist of gear that I wanted.

So I had my key stuff that I had, that could get me through a sprint distance. And then I had a little wishlist, like a little Christmas list of things that I wanted, but as the funds became available or whatever. Yeah. And so that was like my little tri kit wishlist that sat by my bed and I would add things to it as I, each morning I woke up and went to bed, whatever.

And so there you go. Like I had the bike, I had a wetsuit, I had the running shoes, whatever. And then other things that came later. Yeah. [Oh, I love that. That's awesome.] Like I was a Tri geek. still am probably, but yeah. I mean working at Triathlete magazine, so yeah. So yeah. I'll probably be in the wrong job if I wasn't, but yeah.

Yeah. So do you want to, do you want to give us an idea of what you consider to be some of those essential? What would be on your list of things as a beginner that you absolutely need to have, or borrow, I guess like in order to get through your first race?

CF: Absolutely. But before I do that, I love that idea of a wishlist.

I think that is super cool. Because there's like you were saying, there are things you need to get from, waking up and saying, I think I'm going to do a triathlon in six months or eight months or whatever it is to the finish line. Like they're absolutely essential and we'll get to those in a second.

But I think setting up a list of like next priorities and we've, we actually did that in our our buyer's guide. We did something similar where it's like, you *need* this, you *might* need this in a year, you might *want* this in a year. Those are very different things. And I think as Americans sometimes lose sight of what we want and what we need, but but I think that's a really good way to do it.

I think making a list and so we'll get into some of those absolute essentials. You need a bike. Okay. You can borrow a bike. You do not need like... hear this beginners. you do not need a tri bike to do your first triathlon. I don't even, honestly, I think I probably did at least five triathlons before I got a tri bike.

Like at least probably more. Yeah. I, yeah, so you could do it on a mountain bike. You can do it. Like we have the Hermosa beach triathlon here in LA and people do them on cruisers all the time, and they still have a ton of fun. Like they're probably not going to win, but again, like the whole, I'm not a professional thing.

Like you're not going to win your first triathlon. Like I didn't win my first triathlon. I don't know. Did you? Okay. [laughing] So Chrissy Wellington won her first triathlon. Yeah.

EK: But then she's yeah, like she's afraid an exceptional athlete once in a generation, once in a lifetime type of athlete. So yeah. So the majority of us mere mortals are going to, you can rock up to your first race and you can do it on whatever.

In fact, I think her story is like, she borrowed a wetsuit that didn't fit. She borrowed a bike that wasn't, it didn't fit correctly. All those things. Yeah. Everybody's story. I think a lot of people have a story of their first race where they borrowed kit that wasn't optimal.

CF: And you know what, that's kind of part of the fun of it, yeah.

Like things are going to go wrong. I coach high school cross country too. And I always tell the kids, it's like, the reason you have your first race is so that you can have a better second race. It's not, you can win it. The best way to learn is to make mistakes and the same thing with your gear. We'll walk you through some stuff to make sure that you don't make mistakes on every race, but just, you need a bike, you need a helmet, the helmet needs to fit. The helmet needs to be current. It can't be old that's you can have an old bike that just rolls and is mechanically sound and safe, but you need a helmet that you've bought in the last three years, basically.

A 10 to 15 year old helmet, it's garbage, it's broken down. It's not going to protect you in a crash. So that's one of the ones where I'm like, eh, get a helmet. They're not expensive. If one's good. Because that's just a safety thing. If you do borrow a

bike or you have an old bike, you're using, get it checked out by a mechanic, 30 bucks basic tune-up almost anybody can do that.

That's another safety thing. You do not need a wetsuit. But we'll talk about why you want one in a few minutes.

EK: But well, I guess you might, it's the water's cold, right?

CF: If the water's cold, but yeah, just do a little research. My rule of thumb is if it's under 75, 75 degrees Fahrenheit. You're going to be chilly if it's under 70, you're going to be quite chilly.

If it's under 65, you pretty much need a wetsuit. Like I'm under 60, don't go in that water. If you don't have a wetsuit, you'll actually run into trouble. So like 75 is my I'm comfortable at 75 without a wetsuit. You obviously need goggles. You'll need running shoes and we'll talk about some of these things where you can skimp a little bit and where you can't, but you obviously need running shoes, not, skateboard shoes, not tennis, like actual tennis shoes or basketball shoes or something like that.

Like they need to be running shoes. There's not a whole lot else that you need. There's a lot of other stuff that'll make it fun or more comfortable, but it's pretty basic when you boil it down. Yeah. Yeah. So those are, those for me are the basics.

And like I said, that starter kit had way more than that. And that was just a thousand dollars. You could. You could get into the sport for under 500 if you got used stuff or borrowed stuff or or all that.

EK: Yeah. And I guess a common question that we get to is like what to wear in terms of do you wear a one piece, do you wear a two piece, but an understanding that you're obviously going to wear the same outfit from start to finish?

For the most part, most people are gonna wear the same outfit from start to finish like a tri suit or something that you put, if you're wearing a wetsuit, you have, you put on your tri suit at the start of the race. And that stays on throughout the entirety of the race. So obviously

CF: Yeah! A lot of people don't know that, like that's a big --while it's not something that is a requirement in terms of comfort and just lack of frustration, you'll be faster if you wear the same thing the whole time through, and you'll be more comfortable if it's something that's built for triathlon, a dedicated tri suit, something that's going to have, a pad for your underparts, that's probably the best way to put it.

But something that's not so bulky, like on a pair of cycling shorts that when you're running or swimming, you're just going to be in like chafe city. Cause you don't want to be, you can change in and out of stuff. But honestly speed aside again, okay, you're not trying to win whatever, but it's another thing to think about, it's another thing to forget.

It's another thing to, I left it there or here, or how do I put this on I'm frustrated, I'm wet, I'm, your heart rate's high like that, that you want to minimize your frustration. Even if it's your first race that's, but here's the thing. So there's a bunch

of kind of bargain stuff that I, that, I've seen over the years as a gear editor and it's not always the stuff that makes it into like our "swoon" section of the magazine.

Yeah. But like we were talking about tri suits, so like for tri suits, if you just need-- it's your first race. And you're like, I don't know if I need a tri suit or not.... Decathlon. The brand Decathlon. [That's exactly what I was thinking about. Yeah.] Like normally I'm like, ah, maybe get it, maybe don't...Look, you can get like a full tri suit for under 50 bucks. I think it's tops and bottoms are like 15! Like wild and they're good. They're not like, they're not going to shave minutes off your time with their aerodynamic properties, but you're not going to be uncomfortable in them.

EK: Yes. I tested a bunch of the women's ones. I think it was last summer. And like I was, I compared to suits that had three times, four, five, six times the price, some of them. I wouldn't want to do an Ironman in one. But you could for a race, that's like a sprint or Olympic. And you don't want to go spend a fortune on something that you don't know it's going to actually, you're not sure you're going to do any more triathlons.

The first one. Yeah. So I think, yeah, Decathlon is a good call.

CF: Oh my gosh. It's a lot of our American listeners are like the Decathlon what are you talking about? It's a brand. Okay. It's we call it like the Trader Joe's of sporting goods. Cause it's cheap, but it's not terrible.

It's not like your Grocery Outlet where it's a few weeks old or, like a secondhand or something like that. For those of you who know what Grocery Outlet is. But it's still good, but for some, for whatever reason, it's literally like a third of the price of anything else.

Not even like half price, like a third it's so cheap.

EK: Yeah. I think it's originally a French brand, but they came into the U S probably a couple of years ago. I want to say they started coming to the us, but yeah. So that's definitely a top bargain, shopping tip. And any others like that?Yeah. Yeah.

CF: I would say, oh, one thing with the Decathlon check back often, cause they're often out of stock, which, whatever, but I think they get more and more as they go. Don't give up, if you don't see what you have or what you want. For bikes, we were talking about getting bikes under a thousand dollars, a hot tip is bikesdirect.com.

And just so every listener knows, none of the things we're listing or talking about today, have anything to do with this program. These are just things that I've noticed as I've gone. This is not "fitter and faster sponsored by bikesdirect.com." This is just right. [We're not sponsored by Decathlon, yeah...]

Bikesdirect.com would probably not sponsor this program, but whatever. But so anyway you can get like 500 bucks for a road bike on that website and it's not garbage. Like you'll probably want a different one, in a couple of years if you stick with it. You're getting an aluminum frame, it'll get you through your race. It'll be a new bike. So you won't have to worry about anything falling off or, old tires if you're borrowing. I love that, bikesdirect.com. I think you have to assemble them. But if you bring it to a bike shop or assemble it for probably 50, 80 bucks, something like that.

So you're still saving a ton of money. Yeah. Yeah. In terms of wetsuits. I know that was one of the things we were like, there are occasions where you have to have a wetsuit, if it's under 75, really. And most all triathletes are gonna want to get to a wetsuit at some point. Yes. My like big go-to for wetsuits for like bargain shopping is Synergy.

They, I think they have \$180 one, the Volution. They have one that's under 300 that's really nice too. You can find them on Amazon. You can get it in a couple of days. Every time we do a wetsuit roundup synergy, ends up like punching way outside of its weight class. Every time someone's like I had to quadruple check the price, I thought this was like a \$400 wetsuit or whatever.

So those are my big ones, like for wetsuits, Synergy, bikes, bikesdirect.com and then clothing. And actually, I think Decathlon might even have bikes, but I don't know anything about them. But for clothing, Decathlon, for sure.

EK: Sure. Yeah. And interesting. That will segue -- interesting tangent about wetsuits is I know having tested wetsuits a bunch, especially in the UK some, sometimes obviously entry level wetsuits are one thing, but like the the difference between the price and what you get when it comes to mid-level and top level, obviously your beginners aren't necessarily going to dive in and buy a top level wetsuit, but it is worth doing the research and to try and borrow or test in different brands.

Because the difference, I think the difference between a midpoint wetsuit and a top, like a \$1,200 wetsuit, sometimes isn't all it's cracked up to be. Like it's worth, it is worth testing out--if you can-- testing out a bunch of different brands. I think even as a, even an entry level wetsuit price point, because they will fit differently and they will all fit differently based on people's bodies and, like testing, testing them is worth it.

CF: Yeah. And the funny thing that people don't understand, this is still on a tangent, but like the difference between a mid and high end wetsuit sometimes is actually, it'll be way more flexible generally, but as high-end wetsuits and actually this goes for mid end too...They're more delicate.

Yeah. Don't like, yeah, like you'd think, okay, I'm spending all this money. This is going to last me forever. Like a car, for instance, like that's generally the rule, you buy a more expensive car. It's gonna --you're going to get more miles out of it. But in fact, those like, basically like that 600 and up wetsuit thing, they are so fragile, like brands ship literally white cotton gloves with them.

So that when you put them on you don't tear them with your nails. And that's just the function of how they're made. And, they are really race wetsuits. And, they're not going to last more than a couple of seasons. But the entry-level ones like, man, you can beat those up.

Like we used to rent out wetsuits and there are wetsuit rental places. That's another...

EKL Yeah, that was what else I was going to think about. Yeah. Because I know that it used to be a big thing in the UK, but then the price of the entry-level suits came down. So it didn't really make a huge amount of sense economically.

But yeah, but that is a good option. If you don't want to, you don't necessarily want to shell out a bunch of money for a brand new wetsuit you can rent one and then that's also a good way to test out different brands too.

CF: Yeah, exactly. Yeah. That's where I was going with that a little bit.

First of all, when we rented out wetsuits at tri lab and this again was years ago we only rented out the entry level ones and a big reason was because they were tougher.

EK: L neoprene is thicker, which makes them that much more resilient.

CF: Yeah. Where was I going? Oh, but the but testing them out.

That was another thing that, that tri lab did. And also again, tri lab is not sponsoring this. In fact, I haven't talked to those guys in a while. I probably should, but--

EK: What's funny is I used to be sponsored by tri lab.

CF: Me too--So yeah, mostly cause I worked there.

EK: So this is weird. This is weird. I was going to jump in and say this when you said it, but Helen's by Helen cycles was where I had my--when I first landed in the U S back in 2012, Helen cycles was where I had my first home stay, like the guy that owned Helen's cycles.

CF: Oh my gosh. Wait, you mean Jay? There's a name, that goes back.

EK: So the world, the tri world is so small. You're always two degrees--There's two degrees of separation. So here we are on a podcast, 10 years later talking about Helen's cycles and tri lab, and yeah Lloyd at tri lab and Jay at Helen's cycles. Yeah. They didn't sponsor this show.

CF: For all of our listeners! This is, none of this was planned. We're all just--Oh, sorry, just catching up on air here and doing a little nostalgia run.

EK: It's all good. It's, you know. The gear stuff gets boring. People want a little segue.

CF: But we were talking about wetsuit fits, and how great it is to be able to try them on. And I think that goes for, there's a few kind of bits of gear where, like I was saying before, just use whatever, rock up to whatever. But for sure, trying on a wetsuit is important.

And I think a lot of beginners, I remember when I worked at the shop, a lot of people would say oh my gosh, it's so tight. It's so tight. I feel like I can't breathe. I need a bigger one. I need two sizes bigger than this. And generally size them right. It was pretty rare and we're like, wow, we were way off, you're right.

This is off. But the thing about wetsuits is A. if you can try a few on that's huge. B. when you wear a wetsuit in the water for the first hour, the neoprene itself and the seams and the, all the sealants and everything, it actually loosens. So the wetsuit you're wearing in the store, or when you first put it on, when you get it in

the mail or whatever is not going to feel like the wetsuit you have after a couple swims in it.

Yeah. So we always recommend that people, go for a swim before we decide to send it back, or, if you really want to throw it in the bathtub for... Yeah. That's a classic triathlete move. Yeah, because you really want that you really need a good seal in the neck.

If it's so loose in the neck where you're like, hey, this feels like my favorite t-shirt, that wetsuit is trash.

EK: It's going to let in so much water and you're going to be dragging around half the ocean with you as you try and swim. So exactly.

CF: Yeah. You're going to be freezing and you're going to be frustrated.

Same thing with the chest. If that's too loose, you got too much air in the chest and the lower back, for instance sometimes you get it a little bit in the sides, under the arms. It's not going to work. So it should be snug and you should feel maybe slightly uncomfortable for, if you're just trying it on for the first time in the shop.

But like you were saying, every brand has a different fit. Some brands are known for, fitting certain ways. And we generally try to talk about that in our reviews, but, talking to friends and stuff or borrowing theirs, or trying theirs on or, whatever is always a good way to go.

So yeah, that's the one thing, with wetsuits. And then I touched on it before with running shoes. That's one of the ones where I'm like, don't go to a sporting goods store. Don't just buy blindly online. I was talking about bikesdirect.com, and obviously that's pretty cheap but like for me, and I never worked in a running shoe store, so none of this is self-serving.

But go to a specialty running store that like, okay, spoiler alert, they're probably going to be 20% more expensive than something you could [01:20:00] find online, maybe 10 to 20, but what is that like 20 bucks, 30 bucks and the service you're going to get from someone who is a runner, who talks to lots of runners who seen lots of runner bodies and gaits and piles of running.

And who's going to know, are you doing a marathon? No. Are you doing your first 5k? Maybe running a triathlon. Yes. So they're going to be able to point you in the right direction like that to me is like do *not* save a couple bucks on that one.

EK: Yeah. And quite often the best run stores will have a treadmill inside where if you were really, if you're really talking to somebody who knows their stuff, they'll get, you, they'll throw you a pair of socks.

They'll put the shoes on that you're interested in, and they'll put you on the treadmill. And, I think that's a sign of a really good run store and they'll see you run and then watch you run. And a lot of run stores also sell like gait analysis type things too. Obviously may maybe a bit too much for your first one, but it's all worth knowing that if you're inside a good run store, there'll be a treadmill and there'll be somebody who can advise you on whether those shoes are the right ones for you and your run start and your run gait and all the rest of it.

CF: Yeah. And I think like you're saying that's a good sign. Like even if the treadmills are there and they're trying to sell you on a gait analysis and you're not interested in that, the fact that they know that exists, the fact that they, that they understand that's a concept that's just such a....That's like green light, that place.

EK: Yeah. That's definitely something good to look for, I think. And people encouraging you to try them before you buy them is also great.

CF: Huge. I always tell my cross-country kids okay, you're going to save what 20 bucks by buying online.

But, physical therapy costs a lot more than 20 bucks.

EK: Yeah. That's what I was saying. Like in the long run, the economies of scale here, like how much does it cost you when you get some kind of Achilles injury or some kind of ITB problem, like that's going to cost you a whole lot more money to try and fix than 20 bucks, 20 bucks more on a pair of shoes.

CF: And it can throw you right out of your race and whatever. So..

EK: And it's just miserable.

CF: Yeah. And it sucks. Yeah. Nobody likes that. And then the other thing, we're talking about gaits and fits and expertise and stuff is, even though I was talking about bikesdirect.com, I still really like to push even beginners getting a bike fit.

[Yeah.] And I think some of our listeners are gonna argue or disagree with me on this like "oh, bike fit is for when you're, you're going to Kona, you're going to Hawaii Ironman, you're going to 70.3 worlds and you want to just get it just right..." No. if you can get a bike fitter who will do a size consultation before you shop on bikesdirect.com, many of them will, maybe if they're not attached to a bike shop or maybe even if they are willing to spend a couple bucks to do that, like getting that size correct is... It's more difficult than you think, I hate to break it to people who can have all these online size calculators and stuff like... that's to sell you something. Okay. Yeah. And that's a generalization but everyone's different, like all of our bodies are different. So if you can get a bike fitter to help you with a size consultation before you buy your first bike, that's huge.

And most people will do that. And you will have that information forever. Like that doesn't just apply to the bikesdirect.com thing or your first, whatever cheap bike you buy. And then from once, once you buy that bike, go back to them and get a fit. Like it's going to cost you 50 to a hundred bucks, maybe.

Even if it's a \$400 bike. Like my thing is, I, it drives me crazy. I see people all the time out riding \$5,000 bikes with a 10 cent fit. And it's like, what is the point? What, why did you spend all that money? You have burned money. And again, like you're going to get injured quicker. You're going to get knee stuff, you're going to get lower back stuff.

You're going to get neck stuff, hands. You can get issues with your hands if you're not set up right. Obviously just the comfort in your butt, like seat's too high...

EK: And the overall experience too, riding a bike is fun, right? Riding a bike when it's comfortable and you feel fast and you feel good and everything feels optimal.

That's really, that's a fun experience, especially if you're racing, and everything feels dialed in and the peace of mind and the confidence that comes from knowing that you've gone to a bike fitter, especially somebody who's starting out. I think like a bike fit that would cost, I don't know, around here would probably cost you 250 or 300 bucks maybe more. And, but I think that's such good investment when you first start out. And like you say, it's not something that's reserved for the Kona qualifiers or the, if you've made the age group world team or whatever, it's not it's for, I think it's for everybody, and I think the chances are that you're going to enjoy it the whole thing a whole lot more. If you've invested that little bit of time and money.

CF: And it's, yeah, it's totally an investment too, because it's not like you buy this bike, you get the fit. Now you're gonna have to get another, you might wanna, they call it like a dial-in for a new bike or something like that.

That's gonna cost either less or almost nothing because you take those numbers with you. Because you get a different bike, your numbers more or less generally apply as long as you get the right size and nothing's weird about it. So yeah, it's totally an investment. It, it sticks with you forever.

It's like getting fit for a good suit. You have those numbers, those measurements, you can get a good suit again, assuming you don't, balloon up or lose a ton of weight or whatever. But yeah, it's humongous and this is from someone again who has tested \$10,000 bikes, ridden \$15,000 bikes and a thousand dollar bikes.

And if the \$15,000 bike doesn't fit right. If it's not set up right, you're going to be miserable. There's nothing it can do. There's nothing it can do for you to fix all that stuff.

EK: Yeah, absolutely completely agree. So going back to my little triathlon wishlist that I had when I was in, when I was a newbie and yeah, so obviously there was a lot of things on there that were about all, about upgrades, upgrading what's optimal.

What do you need what's what would you like to have? What's completely like pie in the sky, wishlist dreaming. What are the sort of things that you advise people when they're looking to upgrade? And that you're going from that like "Oh, I've done a few races, I'm enjoying this. I know that I want to do more."

What are the best ways to upgrade and where should you be putting that cash?

CF: So I like to think of it what do you want to do with your upgrade? Do you want to be more comfortable or do you want to be faster? And there's some stuff that kind of intersects, that makes you comfortable and faster.

But for me, I always like to start with the comfortable stuff, because sometimes when you're comfortable, you go faster. Whether or not, like whether or not that gear is made to make you go faster. You will go, like you will go faster. If you're sitting on your bike in a more comfortable position, you're not tense. You're not, you're not gripping the bars because you're suffering and your butt or whatever. So my, the first thing, I usually look towards this, like a nicer tri kit, yeah, because that's something that'll affect your swim bike and run the tags, all three it's going to have a higher end shammy, the pad underneath you, it's going to have more panels of fabric.

So it's going to fit you better. It's generally going to have more, wicking fabric. I like DeSoto for that kind of upgrade. I like Zoot for that kind of upgrade. And when I say upgrade, I'm talking about like a \$100 to \$250 tri suit. I'm not talking about 300, 400, like there's other brands that do that.

Great. But those two, I love higher end wetsuit. We talked about that mid range, almost a low, mid... zone three has some good ones for that kind of 300 range. Synergy, I talked about them before for their low end, but they have a great 300ish wetsuit and those ones won't shred apart if you're not super careful with them. Like we talked about. The other thing, especially when it comes to bike clip-in tri shoes or clip-in shoes in general, like that's something that you absolutely do not need for your first or third tri. You can do it in your running shoes with flat pedals or cages or, whatever.

But I think clip-in shoes is definitely a next step for anyone who wants to bike more. I like.. a lot of people like Shimano, cause they're, they have some pretty inexpensive ones. If you want to go a little nicer, the fit of Seedy makes a really nice fitting one for two to 300.

I've also loved Bont. This is a super weird brand. Bont has one that's just like completely mispriced. I'm always looking for stuff that's mispriced. Like this should cost \$400. I think I have one for two, 250, that feels like a \$400 pair of carbon shoes. [Yeah. Who doesn't like that.] I love that. So get those and, a pair of pedals, the pedals don't matter too much.

Look does a good job. Shimano's low-end does a good job that those are, less because you're not really touching those. I don't worry about those, but those will cost you probably a hundred, 200 to get that whole system set up.

And then if you're going for faster, the obvious next step up is a tri bike. We talked about how you don't need a tri bike, but if you want to go faster, a tri bike is going to make you versus a road bike or mountain bike so much faster.

EK: Yeah. Aerodynamics and all that good stuff.

CF: Yeah. It puts you in a better position, both aerodynamically, but also, like over the pedals in a better way.

I've got a list of ones that I like to go from low to high. And I'm actually going to write this up probably the next couple of weeks, because these brands have changed so much. Kestrel Talon X \$1,700 carbon tri bike, original carbon company, boom. Like I've ridden that bike. It's a great bike.

It, 1700 bucks for carbon bike. That's awesome. A2 they're a smaller brand. They do direct to ship. They have an entry-level carbon tri bike, I think 1900 now that one can get a little more aggressive than the Talon X. So if that's something you're thinking about and then some of the bigger names like specialized, they have a Shiv Sport for 2200 that one's going to be like deeper tubes, more aerodynamics, BMC time machine 2, that one's going to be even more kind of tri specific, it's going to have like rear storage. That's 2,500 bucks, I think. And then Argon 18, which you don't see a lot of here in the U S they have the E-117, that one's pretty aggressive with kind of a unique frame. 2,600 bucks.

EK: There's some good price points there for these nice bikes.

CF: Yeah. You're looking at five bikes, all right around 2,500 down to 1700. And you could ride those, like I've ridden probably three quarters of those and I would feel fine doing a 70.3 with those, like with no modifications. I would probably change some stuff if I wanted to do an iron, but it wouldn't be the worst. And then if you're looking for, you want to upgrade more kind of the next step in tri bikes that three to \$4,000 range, you've got stuff like, Canyon Speed Max CF 7-disc, that's new that's awesome.

Cervélo P-Series, Felt B-series, those are like those ones that are really a sweet spot, I think before you jump up to the six to 8,000 or whatever, and we won't get into that at all. But those are, a good place to start for getting faster. And then, once you've got your tri bike carbon wheels, that's the next thing for just that will shave lots of time off.

And I know Hunt has good ones for under 2000 I've reviewed. Profile has some good ones for under 2000. Swiss Side has some good ones for under 2000. You're looking for that thousand to \$2,000 for carbon wheels. Yeah. Yeah. Lots of believe me, there's a world, a universe of things that will make you feel

EK: Oh, there is yes.

CF: Those are like a top line things. Like when I think about, a budget conscious upgrade...

EK: Okay. So closing question for you, Chris, gear and otherwise, when you were first starting out, what was something that you wish you'd known that you know now? [Oh my gosh.] Something... Maybe you learned from your first race.

CF: Okay. So I ran a lot before I did my first tri and I had never experienced chafing that, that I did after an ocean swim. And then... it was a sprint. I did ocean swim, rode a bike with a big seat and running shorts, and then did the run in the same running shorts. So I just, I think I had a Speedo and I put the running shorts over the Speedo because I was embarrassed.

And then used that combo for the rest of the race. It was like... There were holes probably in the sides of my thighs, like where there should have been more Chris, there was less Chris after that race.

EK: Oh, poor Chris...

CF: Yea, so Body Glide! That was something I forgot to say, get body glide. Everyone should be sponsored by body glide.

Everything should be sponsored by body glide. My life should be sponsored by body glide, but yes, body glide and cycling shorts and the tri kit like we talked about early on ...those are what I wish I'd had.

EK: Yeah, I think, yeah. I think we all wish we knew about.. known about body glide a long... a long time ago.

Yeah. Thank goodness for that. Yeah. Okay. Well on that note, we will glide out of the gear section and thank you very much for joining us. Thank you.

Hopefully by now you are a little more in the know when it comes to starting out in tri. Thank you for joining us on this month's fitter and faster. And if you haven't already, please subscribe to fitter and faster by triathlete, wherever you listen to your pods. And if you've enjoyed the show, please feel free to rate and review us. It helps us out and it helps others like you to find us. We'll be back next month when we talk all things open water swimming, but until then happy training.