

“So You Want to Do the Crazyman!”

With good planning and a little advice even the most inexperienced athletes amongst can conquer the Crazyman.

Totalling some 66km, the Crazyman is not a challenge to be taken lightly. But it needn't be a barrier because when broken down the individual disciplines are quite manageable. Almost anyone can build up to a 16km run, a 38km mountain bike or a 12km kayak. All the Crazyman does is string them all together, and with a well-planned approach it's an eminently achievable challenge.

The first thing is to know what exactly you're training for. Ok, sure – you're training for the Crazyman. But are you an individual or team? Do you have an understanding spouse? Are you a first timer? Does your job mean that much to you? Are you there for fun, or to race? All these questions and more will decide how much of a commitment your Crazyman will become.

If you're new to the sport or simply coming back again for more fun then two sessions per discipline for a total of six to 10 hours/week is ample. If you're trying to beat your training partner, improve your time, or slip into the prize list then three or four sessions of each discipline for 10-15 hours will see you approaching 85% of your potential. And if you were wondering about that last 15%, well it requires almost twice as much work and is usually reserved for the elite.

Knowing how much you're willing to put in is one thing, but knowing how to do it is another. The next step then is ensuring that you make the best use of the considerable time you're about to put in.

Understanding Endurance

With three disciplines over 66km it doesn't require a degree in exercise physiology to realise that endurance is everything in the Crazyman. Regardless of the sport at hand endurance is attained by the same basic principles – stressing the body for continuous periods in a manner specific to the sport. What this means is a lot of general running, cycling and kayaking, eventually building up to distances involved. Logic might say that you'd just try to do a bit more every week – and that's not a bad approach – but by taking that logic a step further we can take you beyond the realms of merely finishing. We can turn you into a multisporter.

Specificity

If endurance is everything at Crazyman, then specificity is everything in regard to effectively developing your endurance. To understand this, we need an appreciation of how our bodies work. The human body is an adaptive organism with a memory bank. Everything we do is stored in this memory bank. The information is then processed via our central nervous system so that the next time we do that activity, whether it be kayaking or macramé, the body has adapted to enable us to do it more efficiently. In regard to endurance events like the Crazyman because we become more efficient we burn less energy, which means we can go faster for longer.

The more specific we make our training the more effective we will become at what it is we are trying to do. The Crazyman is a long event, so endurance is the number one aspect. But you can fine-tune that endurance by tailoring it to the specifics of the event. Hills are a major part of the race, so we need to develop a combination of strength/endurance. The Crazyman format calls for you to mountain bike with legs tired from running and kayak when your co-ordination and character is undermined by the demands of the 54km already covered. So your training needs to cater for this. And there are certain techniques involved,

such as running rough downhill and eating while mountain biking. In short – with three disciplines to develop and a life to lead as well, it's crucial to make sure your training is specific to the task at hand.

Recovery

So, we have to build endurance in a manner specific to the task at hand. However, hard training alone does not make you stronger or faster. Even more important is the recovery factor.

It comes back to the body being an adaptive organism. Think about the last bout of flu you had. When you get the flu the body adapts, building an immunity so that we don't get that flu again. Training is the same; we stress the body with cycling, running and kayaking and it actually adapts to that stress by increasing muscle growth, oxygen uptake ability, and co-ordination.

This adaptation process, however, only works well when the body is allowed to fully regenerate. Ever notice how if you don't rest when you're sick you just get sicker! So it goes with training, if you don't back off, both after hard sessions and after two or three weeks of hard training, then you'll get either injured, ill or just plain tired... and it's hard to get fitter when you can't train!

Training Schedules

The principles surrounding endurance, specificity and recovery are the corner stones within which we lay down a schedule. From there we need to look at how to apply them.

Run Training

For most people, the Crazyman run involves 1.5 to 2hrs of tough uphill and rough downhill. The best way to train for this is to train each of these elements separately, then once a week put them all together. Say you're doing three runs a week; that means one run where you emphasise running hills at a firm effort, one run where you emphasise running rough downhill tracks firmly, and then one run where you bring all this together.

Despite all this talk of specificity, it is both ridiculous and inadvisable for anyone to run 2hrs every time they go for a run. Instead we make up for this with an effort vs distance scenario. The three weekly runs might be made up of one shorter run at faster than race pace, another run of average distance at average effort, and a third longer run of close to the race distance but slower than race pace.

So mixing all this into a running schedule, the shorter faster run could be the uphill day. The average length run at average effort might be the downhill day, and for the ultimate in specificity the long run would be the day where we throw it all together, preferably over the actual Crazyman run course.

Mountain Bike Training

Because it follows a tough run, the mountain bike section is probably the hardest element of the Crazyman. Certainly it's the element that requires the most attention in training.

Being an endurance sport, the principles of cycling are same as with running or even kayaking – you need some shorter, faster work, some average length at average effort work, some longer easier work, and of course as much of it as possible should be specific to the demands of the Crazyman course. However, generally speaking cycling requires a little more training than running for the same fitness benefits. 90 minutes solid cycling is probably equivalent to 60 minutes easy running. Mountain

biking, however, is not quite as effective in regard to fitness as road cycling. Firstly, the terrain and downhills often undermine the effort; secondly, the terrain makes it hard to control the effort of your training.

So what does all this mean? Put simply, for mountain biking you should do perhaps half of your cycling on the road. This will bring greater fitness benefits & allow better control of your intensity. So if you're riding three times a week, do your hard, hilly ride on the road. Your average length, average effort ride could be on the road or mountain bike, and is a good opportunity to practise technical skills. Your long, easy ride should be on the mountain bike, and preferably on the Crazyman course. Lastly, you should do maybe one ride a week after a run, so that you're teaching your body to adapt to mountain biking on legs tired from running. Why? Because that's what they'll be doing during the race!

Kayak Training

Kayaking is both exactly the same and vastly different from running or cycling. Because it is an endurance sport we train with the same principles in mind. However, the first things you'll notice about kayaking are: 1) you need to do roughly twice as much kayaking than running for the same fitness benefits; 2) kayaking doesn't need anywhere as much recovery as running and cycling. What this effectively means is that you should and can do as much kayaking, for as long and as hard as your sanity will allow.

This reasoning here is that because our arms are much weaker than our legs, the maximum heart rate we can attain while kayaking is approximately 20 beats lower than our maximum heart rate whereby we would fall over with exhaustion. What this means is that while we might be working at close to maximum in regard to kayaking, we are actually working at nowhere near our true maximum. This means that a kayaker can spend a lot more time training at close to their 'perceived' maximum pace/effort than a runner can. Ask Ian Ferguson – top kayakers train at race pace type efforts almost all the time.

There is more to kayaking than just hard training though. In kayaking, good technique accounts for approximately 40% of your potential. It's to do with the efficiency of your paddle stroke, which effects not only boat speed but also how long you can hold that boat speed. Think of it mathematically – if you put in the training without any thought to technique you might only be operating at 60% of your potential. However, do 20% less training but work as much as you can on technique and you'll probably be operating at 80% of your potential. For tips on technique check out the technique article in our training section.

So kayak training requires a lot of mileage at solid efforts with continual attention to technique. However, if all you do is solid paddling that's all you'll get good at. You also need to know how to handle rough water, wind and shallow water. And even if you're just out there for the experience at sometime during the kayak you'll be racing someone. If you want to beat them you need to teach your body to handle hard accelerations. Lastly, you need to accustom your body to paddling when tired from efforts involving the legs; 1) because you need to train the body to shift blood flow from the legs to the arms; 2) you need to accustom the body to kayaking when low on fuel.

The best way to prepare for these situations is to paddle them. You can develop added strength needed for surging & wind and shallow water by train regularly in those situations. If shallow water and head winds are absent, an old bike tube around your kayak will provide similar resistance. Put some hard surging into some of your sessions for both fitness and to prepare you for the same on race day. Train with food, not only to work out what you want to eat on race day but also to work out how you're going to eat it without falling in. Do at least one of your paddles straight after a run or bike ride so that it becomes more efficient at switching blood flow from legs to arms. And lastly, make sure some of your kayak training is on the actual Crazyman course.

Schedules

Having broken down what we need to do, the final step is to combine it all into a training schedule that combines all of the above. Below are examples based on experience and desired input. They assume a reasonable base fitness whereby you have been involved in some sort of sporting activity every second day for the previous six months – going from cold turkey to Crazyman is not recommended.

Crazyman rookies and anyone with limited time or fitness background would slot into the “Beginners’ schedule. The “Intermediate” schedule is suited to anyone with a background in endurance sports and would return 75-85% of potential while still leaving time for a life. Anyone not too concerned with a life outside of searching for their ultimate multisport potential might try the “Advanced” schedule.

Just because you’re a Crazyman rookie doesn’t necessarily mean you’re a beginner. Someone from another sporting background might be able to go straight to the intermediate or even advanced programme, especially if they want to be competitive. If time allows, most people should be able to handle the intermediate program. But chose the schedule that best suits your current fitness, available time, and Crazyman goals.

Each schedule is based on a 12-week build up. Each session provides a range as to how much you might do. Start at the bottom of that range, building to the top by week 10, then tapering off by reducing your volume by 25% a week over the last two weeks. The key is to line up not only fit, but fit and fresh!

The advanced programme includes weekly run/cycle and run/kayak, sessions. Intermediate and beginners would also benefit from these every now and then, after all it’s specific to what you’ve got to do on race day. A race of up to three hours every third or fourth week is perhaps the most specific training of all. For ultimate endurance development the advanced programme includes a weekly cycle, run and kayak session longer than the Crazyman event itself. For peace of mind, experience, fitness and specificity everyone should try this once or twice between weeks six and 10.

Lastly, if you follow nothing else in these schedules make sure you remember the recovery factor. Every third or fourth week, take a few days off and cut sessions by 25-40%. Not only will your training progress faster, but it’ll probably save your marriage too.

TABLE:

<i>Sample Training Schedules</i>			
	Beginner <i>6-10hrs / wk</i>	Intermediate <i>10-15hrs / wk</i>	Advanced <i>15-22hrs / wk</i>
Mon	Mountain Bike: 60-90min (easy, technical)	Mountain Bike: 1.5hrs (relaxed, technical)	Mountain Bike: 1.5-2hrs (easy, technical)
Tues	Run: 45-75min (firm, rough)	Run: 40-60min (hard, hills) Kayak: 1-1.5hrs (firm, resistance)	Run: 1-1.5hrs (hilly, hard) Kayak: 1.5-2hrs (easy, harbour)

Wed	Kayak: 1-1.5hrs (firm, resistance)	Road Cycle: 1.5hrs (firm, hills)	Run/Mtn Bike: 2hrs (half each) (relaxed)
Thur	Road Cycle: 1-2hrs (firm, hills)	Run: 45-75min (easy, rough) Kayak 1.5-2hrs (easy, harbour)	Road Cycle: 1.5-2hrs (hilly, hard) Kayak: 1.5hrs (hard surging, resistance)
Fri	Day Off	Day Off	Run/Kayak: 2-3hrs (half each) (run includes 10x100m strides outs) (kayak technique session)
Sat	Run: 1-1.5hrs (hills, rough)	Mountain Bike: 2-2.5hrs (easy, hills, rough)	Mountain Bike: 3-4hrs (steady, hills, rough)
Sun	Kayak: 1.5-2hrs (harbour)	Run: 1.5hrs (easy, hills, rough) Kayak: 1hr (hard, harbour)	Run: 1.5-2hrs (easy, hills, rough) Kayak: 1-1.5hr (hard, harbour)