

Five Commandments for Time Trialing

By Dr. Lisa Colvin, PCG Elite Coach



Don't you feel it? Spring *is* in the air! Do you feel like a caged animal ready to claw out of your inside training space and get out on the road? Good! Because it's time to prepare the time-trialing game plan that will fulfill your 2013 racing goals.

First of all, where is your time trial (TT) bike? It is *mandatory* that you have that bad boy/girl operating in tip-top form. Even if you've been riding your TT bike all winter, tune it up.

Now that your bike is ready for action, let me give you my secrets of PR (personal record) time trialing. I call them "Colvin's Five Commandments for Time Trial Success."

I. Thou Shalt Know Thine Equipment

- *Proper fit.* Nothing is worse than riding your TT bike and not being able to sit down! You can buy speed, but if you can't sit on the seat properly, your money is wasted.
- *Practice, practice, practice.* Riding your TT bike should account for approximately 20% of your training rides if you're participating in ITTs in stage races, 50% of training ride for stage racers or ITT specialist, and up to 60% for multi-sporters.
- *Check your tires AGAIN.* I know you did. Do it again!

II. Thou Shalt Know Thy Course

- *Ride it.* This is the optimal approach for successful time trialing. You don't need to ride the entire course; just cover portions that are mentally challenging or segments you can exploit to break the psyche of your competition.

- *Drive it.* If you can't ride the course, at least drive it. It's harder than you think!
- *Take environmental factors into account.*
 - Hazards, road conditions, weather: all these and more can make for a lost season if they're not known.
 - Hilly courses vs. flat courses: how you attack these courses is based on your training, coaching, strengths, weaknesses, and race tactics.

III. Thou Shalt Warm Up Properly

- *Trainer vs. road vs. both.* Using a stationary trainer to warm up before racing your ITT is ideal. Use the routine that you use in training and then take your bike out on the road. For multi-sporters, you may need to ride your TT bike *before* putting it into transition, so make sure it's in race form and in the correct gear ratio for leaving T1 and race.
- *Use warm-up routines that fit the race.*
 - Short courses (2 miles to 20k): It might seem counterintuitive, but you must warm up *longer* for a short TT or prologue. Since you'll have precious little time to get your motor running at the start house, you must have your body and mind ready to roll!
 - Long courses (40k+): These require a rehearsed warm-up you normally use in time trial workouts. On longer courses, don't go out too hard, as you'll have to physically pay later in your race for too much energy expenditure early. Avoid the slow-down or, worse, bonking in the middle of your race.

IV. Thou Shalt Know Thy Start Time

- *ITTs:* What is my start time? How far in advance do I need to be at the starting line? Nothing on earth can make your "race of truth" slower than missing your start time! Find the start sheet, ask a blue shirt (USAC official) if you're unsure, and read the USAC 2013 Rule Book.
- *Multisport (of any kind):* Where is my bike in transition? Where is the mount/dismount line? What time does my swim wave begin so I can get out of that water and on my bike (proportionally the longest part of the race; be smart)?

V. Thou Shalt Ride Thine Own Race

- To your own self be true! Race your race, not someone else's. The first to the finish line wins.
- Don't slaughter yourself in the first few minutes.
- Find your rhythm, hard but not fatal.
- Concentrate! No wandering mind.
- Meter your efforts up, over, and down hills.
- Race through the finish line. In all bike ITTs, go hard 10 meters *past* the finish line. Multi-sporters, practice your dismount skills so you can have a fast flying or standing dismount going into T2.
- The wind is not your friend. Aero, aero, aero.

Coach C's "Lap" Mindset Tip: Break your TT into four parts (like running four laps around a track). In the first lap, don't go out too hard but stay in contact. Second lap, find your rhythm and drill it. The third lap equals opportunity; this is where most time trials or multisport bike legs fall totally apart, so keep the power up while everyone else is trying to rest. The fourth lap always takes care of itself. Bring it home!

Learn from Lisa's mistakes

- It will take a few ITTs till you find the balance between not going hard enough and dying a miserable death on the course.
- If you're not exhausted by the end of your TT (single effort ITT events), you have left precious time on the course! See Coach C's "Lap" Mindset in Commandment V above.
- You *can* buy speed—bike, aerobars, helmet, wheels, clothing, lubed chain, good rubber on the road.
- Never judge a book by its cover. Don't let your eyes wander. Focus on you and not the other \$15,000 aero bike set-ups around you. It's the little girl on the pink bike with streamers and banana seat who will kick your butt!

Follow these five simple rules, and I give you the Coach C guarantee that you will ride faster, finish happier, and set personal records if you have the proper coaching and training.



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