



FROM STRENGTH TO STRENGTH

In triathlon as in all endurance sports form is everything. Increasing your strength will enable you to hold your form under duress, but what is the best way to achieve this? **Kristian Manietta** has a smart training program designed to build strength where it counts, setting you on the path to a new personal best.

TEXT BY KRISTIAN MANIETTA | PHOTOGRAPHY BY ©DREAMSTIME.COM AND KRISTIAN MANIETTA 📷

As a coach of long course athletes (half and iron distance), I'm a big believer that getting strong is a prerequisite to being a successful athlete. It's an approach I have successfully employed myself as well as with the athletes I coach. This is not an opportunity to brag, but a chance to show you the techniques I engage to build strength so that you too can accelerate your progress as a triathlete.

The fastest athlete on the day is the one who can hold their form under duress. This means their form doesn't break down as much as everyone else competing on that day. Not all of us have the ability to win the race, but we do all have one ambition in common and that is getting faster and achieving new personal bests.

My programs focus primarily on strength development via specific sets within our 'core'

sport of swim, bike and run. We focus on developing strength through specific training in those disciplines, while also putting in time at the gym, because a sound strength program will improve stability, mobility and functional strength.

It all comes down to time. We know the majority of age group athletes are time poor, so we can't just throw in gym-specific strength sessions on top of the program – they have to be integrated into a smart training program.

If time allows, you'll definitely want to include strength and core sessions into your plan (see below), these are best placed after your endurance sessions for the reasons mentioned in this article. However if it comes down to only being able to do one or the other, make sure you focus on training in either swim, bike or run as that is going to give the greatest training effect and result.

Having a background as a personal trainer and strength and conditioning coach, I understand what spending time in the gym can and cannot do. I keep up to date with some of the best guys in the field and see if I can use any of the information learned to better my athletes' results.

Unfortunately many triathlon gym programs still follow a traditional bodybuilding type routine that has no crossover whatsoever to developing your performance as a triathlete.

Unless you are recovering from an injury where machines help you control movement and provide specific rehab, I see no value in using machines in a triathlon program. For most endurance athletes using bodyweight exercises will provide enough of a stimulus to achieve a positive response.

My goals for gym work are different and smarter. The reasons for this are simple:

1 Better Recovery: When scheduled an appropriate time after your aerobic endurance session, the strength/core session will have an anabolic (building up/recovery) effect on the body, thus mitigating the catabolic (breaking down) effects of aerobic metabolism. This point is grossly overlooked in endurance training.

2 Injury resiliency: Developing strong and healthy muscle tissue makes your body more resilient. What this means is that you are training your body to accept the demands you place upon it. This is crucial because injuries greatly affect consistency and the athlete who is out there consistently tapping away at a smart training plan is the one who will come out on top.

3 Leverage: By developing what I call pillar strength (hips to shoulders) we improve our stability, mobility and functional strength. This provides a good, strong base or platform from which to deliver power.

Here is a basic strength and core plan that will help develop your pillar strength while mitigating the catabolic effects of endurance training:

WARM UP - MOVEMENT PREP

Hand Walk

- Slowly walk your hands out to extended push-up position
- Take baby steps back to the starting position
- Repeat x 6



YTWLs

- Leaning on a fitball, make the letters YTWL with your arms
- The aim is to initiate the movement with your shoulder blades
- Repeat total sequence x 6



Glute Bridge (Marching)

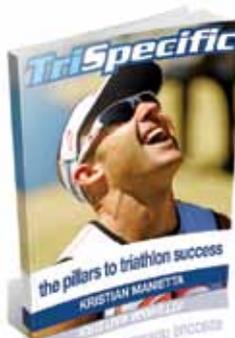
- Lie on your back, push your hips up and squeeze your glutes. Your body should form a straight line from shoulders to knees
- Ensure your toes are raised off the ground
- Without dropping your hips, raise one leg off the ground, lower and lift the other side so you're essentially marching on the spot
- 10 reps each leg



Perform three continuous sets of the above to warm up

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STRENGTH AND CORE PLAN

Complete the below twice through in circuit fashion with 30 seconds rest between exercises and 90 seconds between circuits

A1: Rotational Push-Ups

- Start in push-up position
- Lower yourself all the way down – chest to floor
- Push up and rotate one arm up so you create a 'T' with your body
- Return smoothly to push-up position and repeat on the other side
- Repeat x 10 (5 reps each side)



A2: Alternating Multi-Directional Lunge

- Stand tall
- With feet hip width apart, step out with your right leg and lunge until back knee is just above the ground, your front knee should be directly over your ankle
- Dynamically step back to starting position
- Reverse lunge with the same leg
- Dynamically step back to starting position
- Step laterally to your right and sit 'down and back'
- Dynamically step back to starting position
- Repeat entire sequence x 8 (4 x each side)



A3: Inverted Row

- Lying under a bar or TRX System, brace your abs and lift your body off the ground until you're in a straight line
- Initiate by pulling up from your shoulder blades, not your biceps
- Lower until you're back in the starting position (but do not relax to the ground)
- Repeat x 10



A4: SHELCS

- Using a fitball, lift your glutes off the ground so you're in a straight line from shoulders to ankles
- Keep your hips up, maintain a straight line, and bring your heels to your butt
- Reverse the movement without dropping your hips
- Repeat x 8



CIRCUIT 2 – DYNAMIC FINISHER

Complete circuit twice through continuously

B1: Rotational Plank

- Start in side plank. Make sure your shoulders are 'stacked' on top of each other and don't allow your hips to sag. Hold for 30 seconds
- Return to traditional plank position and hold for 30 seconds, then repeat on the other side



B2: Spiderman Climb x 10 reps each side

- Start in push-up position
- Lift one leg off the ground, externally rotate and bring your leg up towards your arm. Return to push-up position and repeat on other leg
- 10 reps each side



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Finish with 10 minutes easy running or cycling to end with a core sport movement pattern