

Perspective

I started this article after a few back and forth emails with one of the athletes that I coach.

A friend of ours, and a friend to many in Austin, crashed on a bike ride January 4, 2009. I don't have the exact timeline, but it is the end of January as I write this, and he has just recently been moved to a neuro rehabilitation center. Mentally, the recovery process will be a tough road. Physically, it will be a slow recovery as well, but he's already making good strides, pun intended, according to the emails that I have received. No doubt his physical activity and well being has something to do with that.

The entire process got me thinking not just about triathlons, but about what we spend our time on over the course of a day, a month, a year, and eventually a lifetime. I'm not going to wax poetic here, but this isn't a typical triathlon article. Rest assured though, I will bring things around full circle to triathlons or sport. But, more specifically, my athlete brought up the different perspective that we, specifically as individuals, have.

A few perspectives or outlooks that you might be familiar with...the eternal optimist. The person who always thinks that the glass is half full. And, the other end of the spectrum is the eternal pessimist...that person who can never seem to find the good in a situation. I have heard more than one pessimist refer to themselves as a 'realist' because it certainly sounds much better. I don't know if you'd call this a perspective or not, but the "much ado about nothing" person. This person seems to think that regardless of the situation there's really nothing to be concerned about. And the other side of the spectrum is the person who makes "much ado about everything." I know a few of these, and I'd call them overly dramatic. Sometimes it is for show, sometimes I really think that it is honest and sincere.

That's great, how does it relate to triathlon? I like to relate it to triathlon by trying to have, and encourage others to have, a healthy perspective on the role of triathlon in their lives. I don't know what is going through Beau's head right now, nor do I know what his perspective on triathlon is right now. But I do know that prior to his crash, he had a very positive outlook on not only the role of triathlon in his life, but triathlon in general. I'd like to think that he can at least take with him the fact that at the time of his crash, he was doing something that he loved doing. And, fortunately or unfortunately depending on your perspective, the last thing he seems to remember was sitting at the bike shop eating breakfast tacos after the ride.

How do you view triathlon? What do you get out of it? Is it a healthy view or is it more of a 'chore' for you? As someone who races professionally, there are times that it seems like a 'chore', and I'm glad that I have a steady job and income as well. At other times, I find myself asking 'what if' to the thought of what if I'd turned pro 5 years earlier and didn't spend 40 hours a week staring at a computer making sure we have water that is safe to drink.

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And, there are times when I ask myself what type of perspective I'm going to have on the sport when I 'retire.' I use that word loosely, because I don't suspect I'll ever fully 'retire' from triathlons, but there will be a time when I take several steps back.

So, as the season starts back up, ask yourself what is your perspective on the sport of triathlon? Has it turned from absolute joy to something that you feel compelled to do? Is it helping you maintain a positive balance in your life or has it become something that is all encompassing that you don't really enjoy at all? If triathlon used to be your passion, and now it is your poison, make it a point to enjoy racing more, enjoy the socializing more, just enjoy being able to 'do' triathlons. If you miss a workout, do you just go with the flow or fret over it? Are you the athlete who focuses on things beyond your control like the weather or the other athletes? It doesn't pay to worry about the training that others are doing or what is beyond your control. Focus on the variables that you can have some control over – your training, your attitude, your outlook. If you are out on a group ride and wake up 3 weeks later in ICU wondering what happened, will it be worth it? Were you doing something that you truly enjoyed? If you can answer 'yes' to these last couple of questions, chances are you are doing something right.

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