



10 Choices to Make 2012 a Great Year
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There are plenty of choices you can make every day of the year that will help you be a better athlete. None of us are perfect and some days will be better than others. However, if you consistently make more good choices than poor choices, you will consistently perform better than worse. This advice holds true no matter what walk of life we're talking about. From an endurance athlete standpoint, here are ten points (no particular order) to consider as you start the new year. May 2012 be your best yet!

Go to sleep early and sleep eight hours or close to it each night. Turn off the TV, the random internet surfing, the mindless dithering - just pack it in and hit the sack. You need sleep to perform well, stay sharp, and feel good.

Train with partners and friends. Nothing motivates us like avoiding the disapproving phone call we might receive after missing a session with a buddy. Friends are also more fun to talk to than the voices in your head.

Choose better meals. Some of you have a great breadth of knowledge when it comes to nutrition; others don't have a clue about micronutrients and good vs bad fats. A little education goes a long way here, but in general if you are eating out, choose lean meat (chicken, fish) over fatty meats (burgers), healthier sides (steamed veggies or sweet potato fries) over less healthy sides (french fries, buttery mashed potatoes).

Train on a set schedule. A ten day periodized plan is fine for a professional athlete, but most of us need to adhere to a realistic seven day program. The easiest way to stay on track is to create a mostly set plan that repeats each week (the intensity and duration can change). Re: Monday swim, Tuesday run, Wednesday ride, and so on.

Choose your races to suit your strengths. If you hate hills, don't make a hilly race your big event for the season. That is setting yourself up for failure. Conversely, you could train in hills until you are so good at them you like them.

Pick at least one key workout each week where you will really put some hard work in. For you younger than ~35 YO pick two or three. (If you are starting from zero, do at least a month or two of easy-moderate training before starting higher intensity.)

Keep up with your strength training and core conditioning. This will help you avoid injury, and in your later years will help maintain power (pedal stroke, swim pull, and run pushoff).

Keep up with your physical therapy exercises and stretching in general. If you have been diagnosed by a PT or Ortho-doc with some imbalances or other localized weakness, it means you need to do these exercises forever to eliminate the weakness.



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Hire a good coach for a consult or ongoing coaching. A good coach is both a taskmaster and an educator.

Prioritize your races within your life. If racing is just a way for you to stay fit and have fun, don't spend too much time worrying about race results. If you want to be competitive, you need to move the training and racing up a notch in your order of importance.

Marty Gaal, CSCS, and his wife Brianne, are the co-founders and lead coaches of One Step Beyond (OSB), based in Cary, North Carolina. OSB provides personal coaching & training, group workouts, training camps, and swim clinics throughout the year. They are also the co-founders / co-race directors of both the Triangle Open Water Mile Swim Series and the Old School Aquathon Series. You can visit them on the web at www.osbmultisport.com.