

**Camp for Adults**  
**Trimycoach.com Triathlon Training Camp**  
**April 7-10 Blowing Rock, NC**

A few weeks back I had the opportunity to attend this training camp at ZAP Fitness Center in Blowing Rock NC and it was an experience I won't soon forget. While very much looking forward to it, I was also a bit apprehensive and worried that everyone there would be so much further along than me. But as I've learned every step of the way in my triathlon journey, this sport welcomes and embraces all athletes regardless of shape, size, age, or speed. The camp was organized and run by Sonni Dyer and Randy Bernard of Trimycoach.com.

We arrived on Thursday afternoon and most of us had signed up to have lactate threshold testing before the start of the actual camp. One by one, we hopped on the treadmill while Randy increased the speed at 3 minute intervals and checked our blood lactate levels to help us determine our optimal HR training zones. After the camp, we each received our individual reports with HR zones for endurance, MAF (maximum aerobic function), and LT (lactate threshold) workouts.

At dinner, we sat down to the first of many unbelievably delicious meals prepared by Jason, the ZAP fitness chef. Each evening we also had delicious homemade desserts prepared by Zika Palmer who owns and operates the facility. There are two buildings, one which houses the elite runners who live and train there full time. The other dorm style building is rented out to groups like ours and those funds help to support the athletes who live there.

After dinner we had introductions. Most of us were from North and South Carolina, but there were a husband and wife and their friend who had traveled from New York. There were elite athletes, as well as beginners anxiously awaiting their first event, those with a season or two under their belt, and some who have enjoyed the sport for years. We had a great time listening to everyone's stories of how they got to this point.

The next morning, we headed to the off-site pool for a several hour session on swimming drills and technique. Each of us was videotaped with an underwater camera before and after the session and later that day back at camp we watched and critiqued performances, even that of the coaches. If you've never had it done, underwater videotaping shows all the flaws of your stroke. The bright side is, that even in good swimmers, there is always room for improvement. We enjoyed a packed picnic lunch and headed back to camp for a group training session.

Most of the group wanted to do a brick workout, so we headed with our bikes a few miles up the road to the Blue Ridge Parkway. Unfortunately, it started to rain, so after about an hour's ride, the diehards went for a 3 mile run as the skies opened up and we returned to the camp soaking wet, but ready for another great meal! That evening, in addition to watching the swim videotapes we had a lecture on nutrition in training and racing with plenty of time for questions and answers.

On Saturday morning, Sonni and Randy did professional bike fits for everyone and after lunch, we headed back to the Blue Ridge Parkway. This day was beautiful and perfect for riding. Most of us did 2-3 hours, but some of the Iron types stayed out for 5-6. The coaches made sure that everyone's whereabouts were known and that we all had plenty of fluid and food. Those of us who headed back to camp had time for a relaxing trip to the hot tub before dinner. That evening, we did a session on functional movement, a concept developed and described by Gray Cook in his book, "Athletic Body in Balance". The program emphasizes identification of functional weaknesses and teaches athletic movement skills that promote strength and balance.

Sunday morning, we all hopped back on the treadmill to have our run strides videotaped and analyzed and learned who the true runners in the group were. Good news for me again...lots of room for improvement. Afterward, we all headed to Moses Cone State Park for a run and a session on transition tips. Then, it was sadly time to head back and pack up to head home.

Everyone there agreed that we had gained a lot of knowledge to help us in our training. But just as important, we all became friends who have stayed in touch via e-mail and are looking forward to seeing each other at upcoming races. We asked Sonni and Randy if they would be willing to hold an "Alumni Camp" next year because we all decided that we would arrange our schedules for a return visit. The staff at ZAP Fitness Center was so welcoming and accommodating, the facilities were perfect, and Blowing Rock is a beautiful setting for the camp. Maybe I just appreciate such things more in my older age, but it was much more meaningful than my childhood camp experiences.