

“So You Want to Do the Crazyman!”

With good planning and a little advice even the most inexperienced athletes amongst us can conquer the Crazyman.

Totalling some 54km, the Crazyman is not a challenge to be taken lightly. But it needn't be a barrier because when broken down the individual disciplines are quite manageable. Almost anyone can build up to a 13km kayak, a 28km mountain bike or a 13km trail run. All the Crazyman does is string them all together, and with a well-planned approach it's an eminently achievable challenge.

The first thing is to know what exactly you're training for. Ok, sure - you're training for the Crazyman. But are you an individual or team? Do you have an understanding spouse? Are you a first timer? Does your job mean that much to you? Are you there for fun, or to race? All these questions and more will decide how much of a commitment your Crazyman will become.

Establish Your Input

If you're new to the sport or simply coming back again for more fun, then two sessions of each discipline per week, for a total of six to 10 hours per week, is ample. If you're trying to beat your training partner, improve your time, or slip into the prize list then three or four sessions of each discipline for 10-15 hours will see you approaching 85% of your potential. That last 15%, however, is really the realm of elite athletes and requires almost twice as much work, experience and free time.

Outside of absolute beginners, most people find a nice balance on three or four sessions of each discipline per week. Having established how much time you're willing to put in, you then need to know how to make the best use of that time.

Understanding Endurance

With three disciplines over 54km, it doesn't require a degree in exercise physiology to realise that endurance is everything at the Crazyman. Regardless of the sport, endurance is attained by the same basic principles - stressing the body for continuous periods in a manner specific to the sport. What this means is a lot of general running, cycling and kayaking, eventually building up to the distances involved. Logic says you'd just try to do a bit more every week, and that's not a bad approach, but by taking that logic a step further we can take you beyond the realms of merely finishing. We can turn you into a multisporter.

Specificity

If endurance is everything at Crazyman, then specificity is everything in regard to effectively developing your endurance. To understand this, we need an appreciation of how our bodies work. The human body is an adaptive organism with a memory bank. Everything we do is stored in this memory bank. The information is then processed via our central nervous system so that the next time we do that activity, whether it be kayaking or origami, the body has adapted to enable us to do it more efficiently. In endurance events like the Crazyman, when you become more efficient you burn less energy, which means you go faster for longer.

The more specific we make our training the more effective we will become at what it is we are trying to do. The Crazyman is a long event, so endurance is the number one aspect. But you can fine-tune that endurance by tailoring it to the specifics of the event. Hills are a major part of the race, so we need to develop a combination of

strength/endurance. The Crazyman format calls for you to run with legs tired from mountain biking and energy levels depleted by kayaking and mountain biking. So your training needs to cater for this. And there are certain techniques involved, such as running rough downhill and eating while mountain biking. In short - with three disciplines to develop and a life to lead as well, it's crucial to make sure your training is specific to the task at hand.

Recovery

So, we have to build endurance in a manner specific to the task at hand. However, training alone does not make you stronger or faster. Even more important is the recovery factor.

It comes back to the body being an adaptive organism. Think about the last bout of flu you had. When you get the flu the body adapts and builds an immunity so that we don't get that flu again. Training is the same; we stress the body with cycling, running and kayaking and it actually adapts to that stress by increasing muscle growth, oxygen uptake ability, and co-ordination.

This adaptation process, however, only works when the body is allowed to regenerate. Ever notice how if you don't rest when you're sick you just get sicker! So it goes with training; if don't allow adequate recovery you'll get either injured, ill or just plain tired... and it's hard to get fitter when you can't train!

Hard days are defined mostly by sessions that stretch your current fitness. So sessions that are faster than your norm, or hillier than your norm or longer than your norm. These need to be followed by one or two easier days.

In addition to that, the easier week every month ensures the cumulative effects of training don't catch up with you. Every third or fourth week have a day or two off training or cut your normal volume by 50 percent.

So, the principles surrounding endurance, specificity and recovery are the corner stones of any endurance sport. From there we need to look at how to apply them to the Crazyman.

Run Training

The Crazyman is a kayak, mountain bike and run, in that order. But we highlight running because; 1) Running is the best form of general fitness, so if running is going well the other elements tend to come together faster; B) Running takes the longest to build, but once established it lasts the longest; C) running is the biggest injury risk so by giving it early emphasis you have time to build up gradually and if injury does occur you have time to regain fitness.

For most people, the Crazyman's 13k trail run involves 1.5 to 2hrs of just about every type of terrain you could think of: there are tough uphill and rough, technical downhill. But there are also fast, flat trails, even some footpaths and some beach. The best way to train for such variety is to train each of these elements separately, then once a week put them all together. Say you're doing three runs a week; one run could emphasise hills (up and down) at a firm effort, one run could emphasise faster, flatter running on trails, and then one run would bring all this together.

Despite all this talk of specificity, it is inadvisable for anyone to run 1.5 to 2hrs every time they go for a run. Instead we make up for this with an effort vs distance scenario where the three weekly runs might be split as a hilly run of average distance, a fast flat run of shorter distance, and a longer run combining all the elements at once.

The hilly run could be 60-90min at a firm but manageable effort. The shorter, faster run might be 45-60min at your goal race pace or slightly faster. The long run needs to mix in all the terrain aspects and be at least as long as you expect the Crazyman to take you, but ideally building up to 2hrs. Some of them could even be on the Crazyman run route!

Mountain Bike Training

Your mountain bike fitness is important at the Crazyman to, 1) make sure you can handle the tough mountain bike section itself, but also to, 2) ensure the mountain bike doesn't ruin your run legs.

Being an endurance sport, the principles of cycling are same as with running or even kayaking - you need some shorter, faster sessions, some average length hilly sessions, and some longer easier work sessions combining the types of terrain you'll encounter for the length of time you expect it to take you. Generally speaking, however, cycling requires more training time than running for the same fitness benefits.

So what does all this mean? Put simply, 90min minutes cycling is probably equivalent to 60 minutes easy running. On top of that, mountain biking is not quite as effective in regard to fitness as road cycling because, 1) the varied terrain and downhills often undermine the effort, 2) the terrain makes it hard to control your training effort within a specific session. So even for mountain bike training, a certain amount of road cycling - or mountain biking on flat or rolling terrain, will generate better results than heading to single track all the time.

So if you're riding three times a week, do your hard, hilly ride on the mountain bike to simulate the steep climbs and downhills on uneven terrain. Your faster, flatter ride is best done on the road, or on flat to rolling mountain bike trails. Your long, easy ride could vary; maybe one week a hilly road ride and the next week a mountain bike combining all aspects of the Crazyman route, or even riding the route itself.

If you are short time for mountain biking - and many people are - you can short cut the fitness aspect by doing a bit more running and just concentrating on the hilly ride and the shorter faster ride. But don't expect to perform to your potential.

Kayak Training

Kayaking is both exactly the same and vastly different from running or cycling. Because it is an endurance sport we train with the same principles in mind. However, the first things you'll notice about kayaking are: 1) you need to do roughly twice as much kayaking than running for the same fitness benefits; 2) kayaking doesn't need anywhere as much recovery as running and cycling; 3) because running and mountain biking complement each other fitness-wise, it is hard to build kayak fitness to the same level as your running or mountain biking, unless you come from a kayaking background or commit to some extra gym work on top of kayak training.

What all this effectively means is that you should, and can, do as much kayaking as your time and motivation will allow. And that you should, and can, spend more time training at race type efforts than you would when running and kayaking.

There is more to kayaking, however, than just hard training. In kayaking, good technique accounts for approximately 40% of your potential. It's to do with the efficiency of your paddle stroke, which effects not only boat speed but also how long you can hold that boat speed. Think of it mathematically - if you put in the training without any thought to technique you might only be operating at 60% of your potential. However, do 20% less training but work as much as you can on technique and you'll probably be operating at 80% of your potential. But there is a catch-22, in that technique is best developed once you have some fitness and boat skills, and is best done by an experienced paddler or coach watching your technique in practise. So the secret to good kayaking, is to get out paddling with other people.

The Crazyman kayak section is 13k on a harbour that can be rough and windy, but also has section on the Hutt River that can be shallow with fast, flat water. The best way to prepare for these situations is to paddle them.

The Crazyman's kayak takes most people 75-90min, so a weekly session building up to 1.5-2hrs will improve endurance and also your skills if some of it is in rough harbour-type conditions. Shallow water, rough conditions and head winds requires strength, which you can develop by training in those conditions, and/or by adding a weekly gym session. To add speed to your strength and endurance, try a weekly 5k time trial, or an interval session such as 6x 5min very hard alternated with 5min easy.

Back to Back Sessions

Once you have good fitness across all three disciplines, you need to be able to string them together. The key aspects are riding after a kayak and running after a mountain bike. If you're limited for time or new to the sport, you can benefit simply by adding 15min runs after some of your kayaking sessions and mountain biking sessions. But if you're more serious about your performance, then you need to add sessions where you, 1) combine kayaking and mountain biking or running, 2) combine mountain biking and running, 3) combine all three disciplines.

Mountain biking after kayaking is about training your body to switch from pumping blood and oxygen to your upper body to pumping it to your lower body. The easy way to slip this into your schedule is to combine a kayak and mountain bike into one session at least once per week.

Training to run after the mountain bike is crucial because on race day your legs are already very tired when you start the run. Again, once a week combine a mountain bike and run session. But vary the type of session. One week do the hilly bike and run together. Another week do the fast paced bike and run together.

If you are really serious, every few weeks string a kayak, mountain bike and run together with the goal of gradually building up to at least half the time you expect to take for the entire race.

The Training Schedules

Having broken down what we need to do, the final step is to combine it all into a training schedule that covers your bases, but also allows for recovery and life. Below are examples based on experience and desired input. They assume a reasonable base fitness whereby you have been involved in some sort of sporting activity every second day for the previous six months - going from cold turkey to Crazyman is not recommended.

Crazyman rookies and anyone with limited time or fitness background would slot into the "Beginners" schedule. The "Intermediate" schedule is suited to anyone with a background in endurance sports and would return 75-85% of potential while still leaving time for a life. Anyone not too concerned with a life outside of achieving their multisport potential might try the "Advanced" schedule. But just because you're a Crazyman rookie doesn't necessarily mean you're a beginner. Fitness from another sport might allow you to slip straight into the intermediate programme. But chose the schedule that best suits your fitness, available time, and Crazyman goals.

Each schedule is based on a 12-week build up. Each session provides a range as to how much you might do. Start at the bottom of that range, building to the top by week 10, then tapering off by reducing your volume by 25% a week over the last two weeks. The key is to line up not only fit, but fit and fresh!

The advanced programme includes weekly run/cycle and run/kayak, sessions. Intermediate and beginners would also benefit from these every now and then, after all it's specific to what you've got to do on race day. The occasional race in any of the three disciplines is great training too.

Lastly, remember the recovery factor. Every third or fourth week, take a few days off and cut sessions by 25-40%. Not only will your training progress faster, but it'll probably save your marriage too.

SAMPLE SCHEDULE		BEGINNER <i>6-10hrs/wk</i>	INTERMEDIATE <i>10-15hrs/wk</i>	ADVANCED <i>15-22hrs/wk</i>
MON	AM:	MTB: 60-90min easy effort technical terrain	MTB: 1-1.5hrs relaxed effort technical terrain	MTB: 1.5-2hrs easy effort technical terrain
	PM:	nil	nil	nil
TUES	AM:	RUN: 45-75min steady effort hilly, rough terrain	RUN: 40-60min hard effort hilly, rough terrain	RUN: 1-1.5hrs hard effort flat or rolling terrain
	PM:	nil	nil	KAYAK: 1.5-2hrs steady effort resistance
WED	AM:	nil	nil	nil
	PM:	KAYAK: 1-1.5hrs steady, resistance	KAYAK: 1.5-2hrs steady effort rough conditions	MTB/RUN: 1.5-2.5hrs Mtb 2/3 & Run 1/3. easy effort hilly, rough terrain
THUR	AM:	MTB or CYCLE: 1-2hrs steady effort hilly terrain	nil	MTB or CYCLE: 1.5-2hrs hard effort flat or rolling
	PM:	nil	MTB or CYCLE: 1.5hrs hard effort flat or rolling terrain	KAYAK: 1.5hrs hard effort flat water
FRI	AM:	nil	RUN: 40-60min easy effort flat terrain incl 10x100m fast strides	nil
	PM:	nil	KAYAK/RUN: 1-2hrs half each Kayak resistance Run inc 10x100m stride outs	KAYAK/RUN: 2-3hrs half each Kayak inc technique session Run inc 10x100m fast strides
SAT	AM:	RUN: 1-1.5hrs easy effort hilly, rough terrain	MTB: 2-3hrs steady effort hilly, rough terrain	MTB: 3-4hrs steady effort hilly, rough terrain
	PM:	nil	nil	nil
SUN	AM:	KAYAK: 1-2hrs steady effort rough conditions	RUN: 1.5-2hrs easy effort hilly, rough terrain	RUN: 1.5-2hrs easy effort hilly, rough terrain
	PM:	nil	KAYAK: 1hr hard effort flat water	KAYAK: 1-2hrs steady effort rough conditions