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If your target race is Green Bay, it's only one week to RACE DAY! Those of you targeting High Cliff have just three weeks. So, it's a good time to talk about what to expect on race day. Let follow a local triathlete through a typical race morning:

The afternoon or evening before the race: FOXY visits the race site and picks up her packet. The friendly volunteers give her a race number, some information about the race, and a goodie bag. They also give her a swim cap—they explain that her wave, the seventh wave, will be wearing lime green caps. Some races provide swim caps of matching colors for each wave, while others simply require that each athlete wears a swim cap of his or her choosing. Bright colors are preferred because they help race officials spot any swimmer in distress.

FOXY double checks the chart on the wall. She is in the seventh wave, and waves will leave about two minutes apart. Nearly all triathlons feature a wave start. This means that all the hundreds of athletes competing in the race are broken up into groups of fifty to two hundred, called waves, which is still quite a few thrashing arms and legs. Each wave starts one to two minutes after the previous wave. It's important to start with your correct wave, because your finish time is calculated based on the wave you start with.

FOXY notices that the next course talk starts in ten minutes. She heads over to listen to a race official describe the swim, bike, and run courses and follows along using the map provided in her race packet. She learns where the water stops will be and what to watch out for. The officials offer reassurance that every turn will be marked and that police officers will be controlling traffic at intersections. The race official provides a refresher on drafting rules and finally reminds everyone to pick up their timing chip and get body marked in the morning.

FOXY enjoys a healthy meal that evening, being sure to choose something she knows will sit well in her system. After a final check to her bike, FOXY packs her transition bag for the morning and tucks into bed.

4:30: FOXY awakens, surprisingly rested. She eats a good breakfast, one she's practiced with during training so she knows it won't bother her stomach. She packs the car, loads her bike, and heads to the race site, leaving by 5:00. It's about a 30 minute drive, and she wants to be sure to have plenty of time before the race.

5:30: FOXY arrives at the race site and finds parking. She unloads her bike and double checks the tire pressure. She slings her transition bag over her arm and walks with her bike towards the race area.

5:45: FOXY decides to head to transition to put down her stuff before heading to body marking. She finds her spot, marked with her race number. She parks her bike at the rack, which is just a bar supported every ten or twelve feet. She prefers to hook the nose of her saddle over the bar, although she knows others like to hook their brake levers over the bar instead. She plops her bag down in the grass and heads to body marking.

6:10: FOXY makes it to the front of the line in body marking. The volunteer writes FOXY's race number on her arm and on her leg using a black marker. Then, she receives her timing chip. The chip is attached to a Velcro strap, which she fastens around her ankle. It's very important to get the correct chip, because at most races the official time is based on the chip. If an athlete isn't wearing a chip or fails to cross the timing mat at the end of the race, his or her finish may not be recorded.

6:15: FOXY moseys back to transition. She notices the timing mat—it looks like a faded rug at the entrance to transition. FOXY finally realizes why the race officials close transition before the race starts. They need time to turn on the timing mats, and if anyone crosses the activated mat wearing a chip before the race starts, their time will be messed up.

FOXY counts how many bike racks there are from the entrance to transition to her spot. Knowing this will make it easier to find her spot later during the race. She unpacks her bag and finds her sunscreen to apply after being body marked. (The body marking will come right off if it's applied on top of sunscreen. It gets kind of goopy even when sunscreen is applied second.)

Now it's time to set up her transition zone. First, she lays down a small, brightly colored towel. This is not only a place to stand as she's changing her shoes, it's also another way to help find her spot. She's careful not to take up more than her fair share of space in transition—it can be pretty crowded. She lays out her running shoes and bike shoes on the towel. Her socks, rolled up into little sock donuts, are inside her shoes. She balances her helmet on her aerobars (making sure to catch the straps on the ends, so that the helmet can't fall), puts her sunglasses inside the helmet, and finally lays her race belt (with number attached) on top. She knows just what she'll do when she gets out of the water because she practiced at home. (Her dog thought she was nuts!)

FOXY double checks that her water bottles are full on her bike, and she uses masking tape to affix a Gu to her handlebars. She's not sure she'll need it (she's just racing a sprint today) but she feels confident knowing it's there if she needs it.

FOXY walks to the swim start and back to transition, noticing the route she plans to take. She walks to the bike exit, thinking about how she'll run with her bike through the maze of racks. Finally, she walks the route she'll take back in with her bike and out again on the run. She feels relaxed and ready to race, so she heads to the lake front.

6:45: Transition closes. FOXY hears the announcer telling everyone that they must leave the transition area before the race. She notices some other athletes scrambling to get their areas set up and is glad she got ready in plenty of time. She figures there's no time like the present, so she plunges into the lake for a brief warm up.

6:55: FOXY gets out of the water and stands on the shore, chatting with new friends and waiting for the race to start. While she's waiting, she adjusts her goggles and cap: goggles on first, then cap over the top. This ensures she can't lose her goggles, even if somebody accidentally kicks her.

7:00: RACE START! FOXY feels the excitement build as the first wave is off into the water. She has the seventh wave, so it will be about 7:12 before she starts.

7:10: FOXY lines up on the shore after the previous wave departs. She watches the fast swimmers in her group line up towards the front, so she stands off to the side and a bit behind to ensure she

has open water without too many thrashing arms and legs to contend with.

7:12: She's off! It's time to enjoy the payoff from a winter and spring of training effort.

NOTE to those racing Mighty Wolf later in the summer: This race does not use timing chips, they do not assign transition spots, and they do not provide bike racks. The "typical" morning I described is most similar to a larger race like Green Bay or High Cliff. For smaller races like Mighty Wolf, you can bring your own bike rack, hope for a tree to lean your bike against, or just lay it on the ground. Transition spots are staked out on a first-come first-serve basis at these venues.

Learn the Lingo:

Wave: A group that starts the race together. Waves may be assigned based on projected finish time, age group, or first-come first-serve.

Chip: An electronic gizmo that records your time in a race. It must be returned at the end of the race, and a volunteer will typically be at the finish to take it off for you.

Transition: As a verb, it refers to the act of changing from one sport to the other. As a noun, it can refer to the "event" of changing. "T1" refers to the swim-to-bike transition, and "T2" refers to the bike-to-run transition. The word "transition" can also refer to the space in which the transition is accomplished, e.g., transition zone. Very few races can accommodate an actual change of clothes. While you can put more clothing on in transition (e.g., bike shorts on over a swim suit), you can rarely take stuff off, what with those pesky "no public nudity" rules! Also, bear in mind that it's difficult to put clothing on a wet body after the swim. Plan your racewear accordingly.

Fox and Kit Chat

- Ask your Fox what his or her preferred prerace dinner and breakfast are. (But experiment with any new foods before your own race!)
- Ask your Fox how he or she finds the correct transition spot during the race.
- Does your Fox have any prerace rituals? Any transition tips?
- What is different about a race versus a training session, both in terms of energy and intensity and in terms of equipment?