



Race Day

Race day can be hectic to say the least. To make things easier here are some simple tips that will not only make your life a lot easier, but also remove a lot of the stress that comes with competition.

Develop a race day routine

Routines are good. Many professional athletes use routines to not only help them control the variables they face when performing the same activity over and over but to also simplify and make certain activities predictable. To see this in action watch a professional golfer whenever he or she goes to hit the ball. Each and every time they will go through exactly the same routine and if something interrupts that routine, they will take a step back, reset and start the routine over. Obviously you can't always start over, but by developing a set routine you can do the same thing the pro golfer has done, provide a way to reduce the stress of the moment by knowing exactly what you are going to do and give yourself more time to focus on your ride and less time stressing about what you need to do next. Some things that fit well into a race routine include:

- Packing your gear the night before
- Pre and post race meals
- Warming up

Don't Wait Until the Last Minute

Get to the race early so you have plenty of time to go to registration, set up your equipment and get warmed up. If you have a specific warm-up routine getting there in plenty of time to ensure that you can perform that routine will be important. Having a few extra minutes to prepare can let you focus on race preparation rather than pinning your number on your jersey. The same can be true with registration. If you can register in advance, do it. The less you have to do when you get to the race the better. If you can't register in advance get there early so you can sign up and get the paperwork part of the day out of the way early. The bottom line is you want to spend the bulk of your time preparing for the race and not doing other things.

Prepare in Advance

Attached is a simple checklist that you can use to ensure you have everything you need for your race. By getting everything together the night before and having it packed and ready to go you will reduce the chance that you will forget something important. More than one racer has rushed to pack the car the morning of their big event only to find out when they got there that their helmet or cleats were still at home. By taking your time the night before to pack your gear and double check that you have everything, you will reduce the chance that this mistake will happen.



Know Where you are Going

Knowing where you need to be and when you need to get there is important not just for getting to the race. Keep these things in mind for every race:

- Where is the race, how long does it take to get there and when do you need to be there?
- Where is registration? Sometimes registration is held at a completely different venue than the race itself.
- Where is the start and finish of the race? Road races often feature start and finish lines that are totally different from one another and in some cases the assembly area for a race start will be different than where the actual start will take place.
- Where are the bathrooms? Sounds simple enough but scouting out the restroom can be a lifesaver when the start of the race is fast approaching and you gotta go.
- What is the race course?
 - Where are the feed zones in a road race?
 - Where is the wheel pit in a criterium?
 - Where are key parts of the course where a winning move could be made or missed.

Bring everything you Need and Then Some

Be sure to pack all the essentials plus some extra items to make your race day as stress free as possible. In addition to your bike, clothes, and food be sure you also bring a basic repair kit along with some standard tools and spare parts like tires and tubes. If you have them, be sure to bring an extra set of wheels in case you have a last minute problem or in the case of a criterium so you have them for the wheel pit. You should also bring a small cooler with extra drinks and some real food. Race days are often long and having lots of fluids and some real food can be just what you need to keep your body firing on all cylinders. Also, bring a folding chair and something to keep you entertained when you aren't racing or watching one of your teammates.

Summing things Up

The key to a good race day is finding a way to keep it as stress free as possible. If you take the time to prepare in advance, arrive early with everything you need, and stick to a tried and true routine you will find that your stress levels will improve and you will have a lot more time to focus on preparing for your big event instead of rushing around just trying to make it to the start line. A good race day will start hours and perhaps days before hand, not just when the gun goes off.

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