

Everything Learned from Teachers Applies to Triathlons

How much did your teachers really know about triathloning?



We really needed to pay better attention to teachers to excel in the basics of the sport early on. Teachers also shared subtleties that none of us, except the precocious students understood, until we better understand social studies, mathematics, physics, genetics, and psychology; all of which play key roles in our sport of choice.

Everything I learned from my teachers apply in triathlons:

- Play nice.
- Play fair.
- Follow a structured plan for the year to earn best outcomes.
- Passing and not being left behind are strong confidence boosters.
- Extending your arm straight above your head is a starting point to learn and show politeness to answer and ask questions. It also properly positions your arm for a powerful pull in the water.
- Do your homework. It's like practice before an exam.
- Grades for assignments and test scores count for everything when rating and ranking participants like time results in a race.
- Some tests are scored on an absolute scale, like race times.
- Some test scores are graded on the curve like age-group rankings.
- Recess breaks up the day with physical activities like workouts do for work days.
- Drafting answers off other people's efforts is not acceptable.
- Transitioning from different subjects to different classrooms is like transitioning from different sports to different settings.
- Getting assigned to detention is about the same as getting the red card to go to the penalty tent.
- Doing extra credit for improved grades is similar to do extra workouts for improved times in races.
- People excel in some subjects and are only average at other subjects. Triathletes often refer to them as duathletes.
- Different people mature at different ages. Hope for early on-set of adult gene development and delayed gene deterioration as you age up.

- Tough teachers, like tough races, were the ones we remembered the most.

At the Southern Hills Sprint Triathlon in Hot Springs, South Dakota I talked with a retired principal who earned podium in his age division at his first triathlon. He moved to Rapid City from Nebraska to be closer to his grandkids.

The man influenced hundreds, if not thousands of students during his career.

There was a strong sense of pride in his voice of his success. His inner teacher convinced himself to try something of a stretch goal. To learn and do something he was sure he could do but needed to do it to earn the right to feel the confidence of achieving his goal. This process was the same approach in how he encouraged his students during his teaching career, to nudge the future of America, one at a time, out of his or her own comfort zone. He sowed the seeds of the American people to progress from goal setting to action to achievement. And then repeat for generations.

Thinking of this as paying it forward to be the best approach for everyone in his district. Not every triathlete relates the sport to school. But don't believe for a minute a retired principal's success over this Labor Day Weekend didn't relate back to school for him. It did. He didn't feel he was spending his retirement money on some silly sport.

What he accomplished that morning will be remembered for the rest of his lifetime.

Thank a teacher today. Thank your past teachers too. Also, talk with your kids' teachers to see what you may benefit from as a generation or more passed since you graduated.