
RACING IRONMAN

A Guide To Help You Execute A Great Ironman



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Race Execution

You've had this race in the diary for a long time. You've dedicated much of your life over the past few months preparing for it. Training has developed your endurance, your power, your speed. You're fit and you're ready to go.

Now, how are you going to get yourself through 140 miles of swim, bike & run?

I've put together some thoughts on how to execute an Ironman triathlon. This is based on my own racing experiences (14 Ironman finishes, with a personal best of 9 hours and 50 minutes) and my perspective from coaching many athletes to the Ironman finish line.

Hopefully the advice I provide gives you a framework to base your own race plan on, and some words to think about during the race itself.

I've broken this down into:

- Race Plan
- Goals
- The Taper
- The Days Before ...
- Race Execution: Swim
- Race Execution: Bike
- Race Execution: Run
- Race Report

Hopefully, as you read through, you start to think about your own race and how you might want to approach your Ironman.

Ironman Race Plan

The starting point for a successful Ironman performance, aside from the months and months of training, is a well thought out race plan.

For me, an athlete should always have a race plan. An athlete should know how they plan to execute the race. If you haven't already, it's time to start thinking about your race and making sure you have it well planned.

Here are a few prompts to get you thinking and start planning your race.

Race week

Is there anything you need to do this week? Think about your kit. Is your bike ok? Tyres in good condition? Power meter battery charged? Do your goggles need anti-fog? Elastic laces in shoes? Do you know what kit you are wearing in each portion of the race? What if it rains or is cold, do you have contingency plans? Have you sorted your data screens on your Garmin?

Race Day

Do you have your logistics planned? Think about timings. What time are you up? What are you having for breakfast? What time are you leaving the house? Where are you parking when you get there? What time can you enter transition?

Warm Up

Can you get in the water prior to swim start? If yes, do you know what your warm up looks like? If not, what are you going to do instead?

Swim

Where are you positioning yourself at the start? What is your swim strategy? Do you plan to be aggressive at the start and then settle into a pace? Or are you keeping the pace steady? Maybe trying to build pace through the swim? Are you looking to draft off other swimmers or are you aiming for clear water? Will you have any mantras or cues in the swim to keep your mind focused? Something like "Smooth is fast"? Or more of a technical cue - reach, catch, pull?

Transition 1

How are you laying things out? Do you have an order of putting things on? Work from the feet up? Or the head down? Shoes on the bike or putting them on and then jumping on your bike?

Bike

What is pacing going to look like? Steady all the way? Building into the race? Are you going to use power? Speed? Heart rate? RPE? A mix? What about eating and drinking on the bike? Do you know what you will use and when?

Transition 2

Again, what does this look like? What order are you going to change?

Run

Do you know what pace you are aiming to run at? Is that realistic? How are you keeping track of your run - pace, HR, RPE? Taking a gel on the run? What is your run-walk strategy?

There are no right answers here. It's your race and there are many ways to approach it. The above questions are to get you thinking about your race and the finer details. I can advise on some of the above. I always find it useful to put a race plan together - and write it down.

Does this help? Has it got you thinking? Go and write your plan using the pointers above and find out.

Setting Overall Goals & Targets For An Ironman

First-Time Ironman

If it's your first one, your primary goal should be to finish! It's a massive event, that most of the population can't even comprehend. Respect the distance and celebrate the finish. You started this journey and entered the race (probably) because you want to complete an Ironman, you want to tell your friends you're an Ironman, you want to tell yourself you're an Ironman. Whether that is an Ironman in 10 hours or 17 hours, for your first one it shouldn't matter.

A, B & C Goals

I like to have a range of goals going into any race.

For me, Goal A should always be to finish. That's your primary goal. Anything else is a bonus.

Goal B might be to go quicker than you did in your last race, or to achieve a personal best. This is very much course-dependant, so be careful about comparing Ironman race times across different courses.

Goal C might be a loftier 'dream goal'. If everything goes absolutely perfectly, what might you be able to achieve?

You may choose different goals, not time-based. "I want to reach the podium in my age group" or "I want to finish without going through any dark patches" or even "I want to enjoy the whole experience".

Time Goals

We may set time goals. Often these are based on round numbers or breaking a particular hour time.

"I want to do the race in less than 10 (or 12 or 14) hours".

They're great motivators, but just be careful of basing your happiness and satisfaction (or not) on this type of goal.

Time Goals In Each Discipline

We may break the race down and set time goals for each discipline.

"It would be great if I could do the swim in less than 60 minutes"

"I want to run under 4 hours"

"I really want to nail the bike and go under 5.30".

Great to have these types of goals, but ...

- Make sure they are realistic.
- Make sure they fit in with your overall A, B & C goals above.

Managing Goals During The Race

During the race, be prepared to let go of some of the goals you've set. If your bike time goal means you are working really hard, pushing higher power than you should and going into the red during the ride, to keep up with your average pace, then it's going to end in disaster. In this example, let go of the bike goal, drop the pace and ride 'sensibly'.

You may come out of the swim, check your watch and discover that you've swam five minutes slower than you wanted. Don't stress. Don't carry the disappointment of that swim time through the rest of the race. Let it go. You could have swam brilliantly, but the course was long, the tide was strong. This isn't reflected in your swim time. Even if you didn't swim well, there is nothing you can do about it now. Move on and execute the next part of your plan.

Goal - To Run Well

For me, the measure of a successful Ironman race is whether you run well. We'll talk about the reasons why this is important later. You might have a simple goal to "Run Well". By doing this, everything in the race is then geared towards this goal. Pacing in the swim and the bike. Nutrition and hydration. Your goal means you are doing everything to set yourself up for good run. In this example, you are moving away from an overall time goal and focusing more on process (and patience!).

Shifting Goals

You may have a race that doesn't go to plan. A mechanical on the bike. A small crash. Setting off too fast so you have to really slow down. Gut issues. Don't write off your race. Change your goal.

"Ok, it's not gone well so far, I'm not going to hit my pre-race goals but I'm going to execute this run perfectly".

Get something out of the race.

I had a race where things fell apart a little bit during the early stages of the run. I slowed down, walked, felt miserable. Then when nutrition took effect, energy returned and I stopped feeling sorry for myself, I decided I was going to finish strong and run the last 10k in less than 50 minutes. I set off, energised and much more positive than I'd been all race. I ran that 10k in a few seconds over 50 minutes, overtaking so many people! I have a positive memory of that race because of that last 10k.

The Taper

What Is A Taper?

The taper is all about freshening up, shedding fatigue and allowing your fitness the chance to shine on race day.

What Does The Taper Look Like?

The length of your taper relates to how much training you've been doing, how much fatigue you're carrying and the distance of your event. For long distance events such as triathlon or marathon running, I like to use a two week taper for most people for their key events. This allows recovery but doesn't affect fitness too much.

What Sessions Might Be Included In A Taper?

The taper isn't a two week rest though. We are continuing our training, on our usual training days, but reducing the length of the sessions. After all of the long sessions leading up to this point, the shorter sessions can take a bit of getting used to. We are also reducing the amount of intensity in the sessions - but not eliminating it. We are keeping some intensity in the sessions - but usually limiting it to short efforts at race pace or slightly above race pace.

Temptation

As we freshen up, it can be tempting to push the pace a little - because you can. Don't be tempted to do too much in an effort to 'prove' you are feeling great and are ready - save that for race day!

We're doing just enough to feel good and then we're backing off and taking it easy. If you keep this in your mind during the taper, you won't go far wrong.

Word of Warning

Some people start to feel really sluggish during the early part of this period. Mysterious niggles can appear. Random aches in random places! Your mind can often be hyper-sensitive. "Was that a twinge in my calf just then" was my usual one! You will freshen up and you will start to feel really good before your race. Trust the taper!

Race Planning & Visualisation

Not strictly part of the taper, but this is a great time to think about your race and how you're going to execute it. Putting together a written race plan, which includes nutrition / hydration, is really useful and helps settle pre-race nerves. Visualisation, putting yourself in various race situations, is another useful exercise. As you plan your race and visualise your race, questions may occur. Anxieties may emerge. Speak to your coach (or other athletes) for some guidance / another viewpoint.

Finally ...

The taper is an exciting time. Enjoy it. Commit to it and give yourself the best opportunity for a successful race.

The Days Before ...

You've spent months working for this race. The training has been great. Taper has gone well. You're feeling like you're ready to go. Please don't let the few days before your race ruin everything.

What Am I Talking About?

- Spending hours at the expo, buying all of the merchandise, standing around and doing lots of walking.
- Watching other triathletes do lots of sessions prior to the race and then trying to mimic them.
- Not eating and drinking enough in the days leading into the race.
- Filling up your free time with lots of work stuff.
- The stress of not knowing what you're doing, when you should be doing it.
- Trying all of the free stuff at the expo - or picking up new nutrition or energy drink because they have a big crowd gathered around!

What Would I Advise?

Planning

Have a plan. Know what day you're going to register for the race. Know when you need to rack your bike and hand in your transition bags. Don't leave it to chance. You don't want to leave it until the last minute and find yourself stressed because you're rushing around.

Checklist

Linked to planning, but have a checklist for the various things you have to do. It will keep you on track. A checklist for what race kit is going into the various transition bags for example, will save you packing, re-packing and then packing them again, 'just to make sure'. Your race morning checklist will help you make sure you pack everything and do all of the necessary admin. The amount of athletes who leave their drinks bottles in the fridge on race morning is amazing.

Limit Standing & Walking

Try and limit your time at the expo. Go around once. Buy your stuff. And then go. And, particularly for races abroad, the day before the race is not a time for sight-seeing.

Don't Copy Other Athletes

When you go abroad for a race, you see this all of the time. Lots of athletes building their bikes and going out for long rides because the weather is great, you're feeling great, and you see others doing it so you think you should. And then coming back and running long intervals at 3 hour marathon pace - like everybody else! Instead have confidence in your preparation and your plan. Do your short sessions that you have planned, and then rest.

Minimise Stress

It's not easy, but try and switch off from the stresses of life. You've spent months and months working for this. This is your moment. That work email can usually wait until the Monday after the race.

It's easy to see how it can go wrong, isn't it? Lack of thought or planning or just being a bit absent-minded is easily done, but can have big consequences. Think about these few days and plan them out properly - it makes life so much easier!

The Ironman Swim

In theory, this should be the easiest discipline to execute. It's first. You are full of energy. No nutrition issues to worry about. There is minimal kit. Compared to the bike and the run, it's short. You find some space and you swim at your own pace for 3.8k. Simple. Right?

The Ironman swim is plagued with fear, adrenaline, nerves, chaos.

It is easy to get this wrong and have a terrible start to your day.

Things to watch out for ...

- Starting too fast because "it doesn't feel hard"
- Getting caught up in the chaos, bodies everywhere.
- Allowing external factors to get in the way and disrupt your rhythm, concentration and create anxiety.

Warm Up

Even though you have a long day ahead, you should warm up prior to the swim. Ideally, you want to have a nice feel for the water and raise your heart rate a little. However, not all races allow an in-water warmup. You need to find another solution.

Some mobility work, loosening up the shoulders, neck, torso is good. Something to raise your heart rate a little - a short jog is an option. If you can't manage any of these, you should try and start the swim a little slower than you would like and use that as your warmup. 200m of slightly easier swimming will set you up much better than blasting off too fast!

Starting Too Fast

Race morning. Your big event. You're excited and nervous. The gun fires. You start quickly. You follow others. It feels easy and manageable ... until it doesn't. You are surrounded by other swimmers. You are breathing heavily. You are starting to tire but you've only done 300m and have lots more swimming to do. You start to doubt yourself. You panic.

You need to regain control. You need to control your breathing. Reduce your heart rate and reduce your demand for oxygen.

What do you need to do?

- Reduce your leg kick. This helps bring heart rate down and reduces the perceived effort.
- Make sure you exhale fully. You don't need (or want) to hold your breath, instead relax and release the air. Try to 'sigh' your breath out – rather than blowing forcefully.
- Breathe every two strokes to maximise oxygen intake.
- Control your stroke rate. Often this means slowing your stroke down a little. Controlled rather than frantic.

- Take your mind out of the situation (the chaos) and focus on your swimming. Think about each stroke. Perhaps count strokes. Doing this makes you focus on what you're doing rather than the chaos of the swim.

All of this will help you settle and re-establish your swim rhythm. Once you've settled, you can then get on with – and enjoy – the rest of the race.

Key Things To Remember

Start Pace. Unless you are deliberately trying to get ahead or find some clear water, start steady. Imagine I asked you to swim 3,800m in the pool - you wouldn't charge out and start swimming really fast would you? Try and apply the same logic here.

Frequent Sighting. You will be quicker if you swim the straightest line possible. To do this, you will need to sight regularly - and frequently. Stay on course!

Drafting. Swimming just behind a swimmer or group of swimmers can be really useful to save some energy. Just make sure you do some of your own sighting too. You don't want to be a zig-zagging drafter.

The Ironman Bike

The Badge of Honour

The race finishers area is full of athletes talking about the bike, all having the same conversation ...

"what was your bike split" or the even more common "my bike split was xx, but I had some problems on the run".

The bike split seems to be like a badge of honour amongst triathletes.

Instead of being like these athletes, you want to be that rarer athlete, the one who says "I'm really pleased with my run".

To do that, you need to pace the bike knowing it is 180k long AND you have a marathon to run after it.

Tales Of Woe!

You will not see a triathlete who has gone too hard on the bike go on to have a good run. Instead, there will be tales of woe. Nutrition was wrong. Not enough run miles in training. An old run injury returning. Stomach was in bits. Felt really weak. More than likely these are just symptoms of poor pacing on the bike.

Patience

One more point. A "slow" bike is going to cost you 10-15 minutes compared to a bike where you applied pressure and rode (too) strong throughout. A run where you are forced to walk for miles and miles because you have nothing left, is going to cost you hours!

So, how do we avoid the "could have been a great race if I'd sorted the run" trap?

We think about pacing and nutrition on the bike. We are generally a little cautious on the bike, particularly early on. We know we have a long day and going hard in the first few hours is not going to end well.

Metrics & Zones

The general advice is to try and ride the bike at between 65-70% of your FTP. Try this pace on your turbo, it feels easy. That's how it should feel. You do have a marathon to run after it! Think Zone 2. If you are using a heart rate monitor, look at your zone 2 heart rate range. You may drift into zone as the race progresses (heat, dehydration, fatigue creeping in), but keep it low zone 3 if you can.

That said, don't be a slave to your numbers. If you are supposed to be pushing a target power eg 150w, but your legs are struggling or your heart rate is rocketing and you are finding it difficult to hit the numbers, race on feel for a while. Drop the effort. Bring your perceived effort to a level you are happy with and able to sustain. Your legs might come back to you after a little while or it might not be your day on the bike. Either way, pushing on when your body is telling you to slow down (on the bike) is not going to end well. Listen, slow down and re-group.

Hills

Of course, some bike courses are hilly and there is no way you can stay in zone 2 on the hills. My advice here would be to try and keep a cap on your power if you can. Try not to go above your FTP - even for short bursts. If you can, use your gears and spin up the hills. You will feel fresher at the top - and then you can crest the hill and power down, rather than reaching the top gasping and cruising for a minute or two. Again, some triathletes will be standing and grinding big gears and will zip past you. Honestly, let them!

Peer Pressure

Adopting the 'keep a lid on it' bike strategy is sensible and works, but you have to trust it. You will see so many people fly past you, particularly early on, and you will wonder if you should follow them. Please don't! You don't know if they are elite athletes - or just really poor pacers. Stay humble, respect the distance! If you execute well, the chances of you catching them later in the race are high. You may even catch them later in the bike as the reality of 180k presents itself.

And you may know some Ironman athletes. Naturally, you want to beat their bike split. Or perhaps you think "they managed to sustain that pace, so I should too". You know that's wrong, don't you?!

Artificial Targets and Round Numbers

And beware artificial targets. A six-hour bike split is a classic.

"I'll be happy if I can get under six hours for the bike".

Why? Where did that number come from?

Best Advice

The best advice I received was to take the first hour really easy. If you have a target pace or power, this first hour should be below that target. You've just swam almost 4k, charged through transition and have 10 or more hours ahead of you. Use this hour as recovery from the swim, a chance to let your heart rate settle and find your rhythm on the bike. Do this and you will see people fly past you. When that happens, smile to yourself with confidence that you know what you're doing.

Nutrition

Start your feeding early and keep it consistent. Have a nutrition plan which you've practiced in training and try and stick to it.

Mine was simple. Every 30 minutes, my watch would beep and I would take a gel. I would wash this down with water or electrolyte drink. In some races, I would have a caffeine gel (instead of a normal gel) after two hours and four hours. That was my strategy. Sometimes it worked, other times due to over-pacing or heat or lack of hydration, I would start to feel bloated after three or four hours. The nutrition plan then had to change.

So, I would suggest you have a 'just in case' strategy. The 'Special Needs' bags are great for this. Some flat coke in a bottle, perhaps some solid food, a banana, a cereal bar or even a chocolate bar are great emergency choices!

Exceptions

Of course, there are exceptions to the advice above. If you are going to be battling cut offs, there is little point saving lots of energy for the run ... if you don't make it that far. I would still adopt the 'first hour a bit easier' strategy, but overall, you will want to push a little harder than the advice above. You make the bike cut off in 10.5 hours, you still have more than six hours to complete the marathon.

Continuous Problem Solving

In the race, be mindful of where you are and what you're doing. Are you doing things in that moment that are helping you achieve your goals, or potentially hindering you? Have you eaten / drank recently? How are your legs feeling? Is your heart rate creeping up? Are you in the right gear? Are you riding too quickly?

What action do you need to take in that moment to give you the best chance of success?

Anything I've Missed?

Does this help? Have I missed anything? Any questions arising from this?

If nothing else comes across from the notes above, go 10-15 minutes easier on the bike and you will potentially save hours on the run!

The Ironman Run

Remember, The Run Is Determined By Your Choices So Far

All of the choices you've made during the day are about to come into play. If you've made good choices, thinking about this part of the race the whole time, then you have a good chance of pulling off a good run. If you have been a little reckless on the swim or the bike, then you may be in for a long marathon.

When I say reckless, I'm talking about pacing – have you gone into the red for long periods of the race? I'm talking about nutrition – have you eaten regularly and frequently? I'm talking hydration – have you been drinking enough? How you answer those questions will determine the next few hours of your life.

Breaking It Down

Assuming you've paced the bike well, are well-fuelled and hydrated, how are you going to tackle the Ironman run? 42.2k or 26.2 miles is long way and is a bit daunting isn't it? Perhaps break the course up into sections.

Most run courses are laps. Often 4 x 10k (plus a bit). You might want to think about running a 10k four times, rather than 42k. Get through each lap. Mentally, it's easier to think "2 laps done, 2 laps to go".

10k laps are still a long way, and difficult to think about when you are running on reserves. Perhaps think about running the Ironman marathon one aid station at a time. This way, you are running for 10-15 minutes at a time, before being rewarded with a drink, some nutrition and some friendly faces. Don't think any further than the next aid station. This helps you stay in the moment, rather than let your mind wander too far ahead.

Use Walking Strategically

Unless you are at the very elite end of the field, you are not going to run the whole Ironman marathon. As much as you think you won't, you will definitely walk at some point.

My strong advice is to have a plan for that walking. Don't be the athlete who says "I'm going to run as far as I can and then run-walk". It's too late then. You will be suffering, and those walk breaks will get longer and longer, and slower and slower.

I would urge you to think about a run-walk strategy which begins as soon as you start the run. There are many ways to do this.

- You could run for nine minutes and walk for one minute.
- You could run between the aid stations and then walk through them.
- You could decide to walk all of the hills, and run the rest.

Don't think a run-walk strategy is 'settling' for a slow run. Done well, you can run-walk your way to a really fast Ironman marathon. I have run a 3.29 and a 3.37 using this strategy. I'm sure others have too.

Whatever strategy you adopt, do it from the start, whilst you are “fresh” and the chances of keeping this going until the end is good. (Even then, you might have to adapt as you go, changing from 9/1 to 8/2 to 5/1).

Start Of The Run

Usually, you come out of transition and you see many, many athletes running at 5 minute kilometre pace (8 minute miles) or faster. That's 3.30 marathon pace. Look at the results afterwards, and you won't see many athletes anywhere near that run time. In other words, athletes are starting the run much too fast and setting themselves up for failure.

My advice would be to start the run deliberately slow. If you have a target time of 4 hours for your marathon, that's about 5.40 min/k pace. For the first 1-2k, run slower than target pace, perhaps 6 min/k pace. Use this time to get your heart rate under control, feel relaxed and find your run rhythm.

I need to warn you that this is really hard to do. You finish the bike, charge through transition, legs are often feeling quite good, turning over well, and before you know it you look down at your watch and you are running at 10k pace! It feels really hard to slow down. Make the effort. It's well worth it!

You might want to find a runner who you could easily overtake. Instead of overtaking, sit in behind them for five minutes. This will force you to slow down.

'Getting Dressed' On The Run

Also, depending on your transition strategy, it may be a time to do some 'admin'. In many races, rather than do everything you need to in transition, put bits of kit in a small ziplock / plastic bag, grab it and go. This could be your Garmin, sunglasses, hat, gels, suncream, whatever. Don't spend time in transition getting dressed, do it on the run whilst you are running slowly.

Run Pace

Be realistic with your target run pace. As I highlighted above, the percentage of people aiming for 3.30 marathons and the percentage of people actually achieving that is really small. Keep in mind that a well-executed marathon will usually be 20-30 minutes slower than your actual standalone marathon time. That's if everything goes well. So, if you can run a 3.30 marathon, and your training has gone well, you are aiming for around 4 hours. Pace accordingly!

Eat!

It's quite easy to eat on the bike. Eating whilst running is a different matter. For one, you have 6 to 8 hours of gels inside you already, and you really can't face any more. Two, you are bouncing along and it's difficult to stomach food. Even though the temptation is to stop eating, I would urge you to continue eating. Gels, shotblocks, energy bars, even an emergency snickers bar (my favourite race nutrition on the run!). Coke and energy drinks are good too - but some nutrition really makes a difference.

Inside Your Head

It is going to get tough on the run. You will want to slow down. You will want to walk a lot. You may question your life choices. You will have a voice in your head trying to undermine you. Remember, though, you don't have to follow the advice of the voice in your head.

Let me tell you, there is no better feeling than defying the voice in your head. Not giving in and taking the race on is liberating.

If (when) you have these negative voices, think why. Often, negative feelings creep in when nutrition is low. Think 'grumpy toddler who needs feeding'.

As you run, you should check in with yourself regularly. A mental checklist. How is my form? Am I running tall? Is my cadence good or am I shuffling? How is my face? Am I smiling or am I grimacing? Have I eaten recently? Do I need a drink? Am I too hot? What can I do right now to improve the situation?

Too Slow

If you think my advice is too conservative, urging you to slow down all of the time, then you may find yourself in the race with loads of energy (lucky you!). The last 8 or 10 miles of the race is the chance to be a superhero.

If there is a time to overtake people in the race, the last 8 miles is the place to do it! There is no better feeling than actually feeling good in an Ironman marathon and flying past people in the latter stages of the run.

The last eight miles, if running really well, may take 1.00 to 1.10. Eight miles, if mostly tired walking with a little jogging, will take two to two and half hours. You definitely want to be the person flying! (I've been in both positions - and I know which one I preferred!)

Much More

There are probably lots of other things I could cover. Special Needs Bags. Dark patches in the 3rd 10k loop. Staying cool. Keeping spirits high. Staying in the moment. Goal A, Goal B & Goal C. Emotions. Finding out a lot about yourself. Finish lines. Maybe these are for another post.

In Summary ...

Pace well. Eat well. Drink well. And the glory is yours!

The Race Report

Take a few minutes in the days after your race to reflect on your performance and your experience. I always find writing a race report helps me delve deeper and get some extra insight. This report can be based on data or from your feelings before, during and after the race. Some athletes like to tell a story, others just the facts. Whatever works best for you.

Pre-Race Feelings

Look back, before the race, and think about the build up. Were you excited and feeling good in the days leading up to the race? Did the taper freshen you up? Anything you'd do differently - in training and lifestyle?

How about the hours leading up to the race? Breakfast ok? Relaxed or stressed? Plenty of time or a bit of a rush?

The Swim

Tell us about the swim? Were you warmed up prior to starting? Did you try and start steady and build into it - or did you go off a bit fast? Feel good in the water or was it a bit of a fight? How about your open water skills? Sighting good? How would you improve your swim next time?

Transition

Was transition smooth? Did you have everything you needed? Did it go to plan?

The Bike

Overall, how did it go? Were you able to stick to your planned pace, power, heart rate? Strong throughout or a drop off somewhere? Aero position good? Did you have to make any adjustments through the race? How did your fuelling go? Overall, any lessons to learn from the bike leg?

The Run

Again, tell a story of how it went. How did you feel when you started? Did you find your rhythm? Were you on the edge or in control? Mentally, how were you? Anything you'd do differently in future? Did nutrition and hydration go well? Any issues?

Lessons

Overall, what three things went really well?
And then, what three things would you improve (and how?).

And Finally ...

Your overall picture of how you think it went and how satisfied you are with your performance.

And ... That's It

I hope the advice and guidance above has stimulated some thoughts about how you plan to execute your next Ironman race.

It's not exhaustive. There will be other things to consider.

It's not prescriptive. There are many ways to race.

It's not guaranteed. 140 miles is a long way to race and many things can (and do) go wrong.

It is based on my experiences and the way I would suggest you approach your next race.

An Ironman is an awesome race. A race that takes you to the edge and helps you discover yourself ... every single time you do it!

Good luck on the day. I hope you enjoy it as much as I do!