

Commentary on *Competitive Performance of Elite Olympic-Distance Triathletes*

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While I can see the logic in your 1.2%, I believe that the addition of drafting in the cycle stage has made the running stage more reliable, because the athletes in a cycling pack can conserve their energy for the run. I would therefore argue that a smaller improvement in performance is now worthwhile, probably a little less than 1% in run speed.

You have not dealt with the women's triathlon. The smallest worthwhile improvement is likely to be greater for women than for men, given that the men's competition is generally closer (that is, the top ten finish closer together). The International Triathlon Union takes this difference between sexes into account by setting different cut-offs for triathletes to earn competition points: 5% of the men's winning time is the cut-off for men, but for women it is 8% of the women's winning time.

Regarding the transitions, I think that in

practice it is still possible to make mistakes that place athletes back a group on the bike ride. Of course, the measured transition (between timing mats) does not reflect the actual full transition (from stand up at swim exit to up to full speed on the bike). So while I agree that the measured period you have in your paper is probably not worth much, this does not reflect the full picture of what can be worked on by the athletes to improve performance in transitions. On many occasions I have seen athletes losing a group in the ride by not being able to take their wetsuit off quickly (stuck zipper, not finding the zipper cord, wetsuit stuck at ankles) or through errors at transition exit (shoes coming off bikes, crashing into other cyclists at mounting/dismounting, being penalized by incorrect bike racking). The frequency of such errors can be reduced through practice and through experience of the heat of competition.