



Summer Aquathlon Tips

By Elaine Seasly

The Tucson Summer Aquathlon series (<http://www.swimandrun.com>) usually runs on Wednesday nights during the summer, with additional Monday night races during some weeks. The aquathlon (pronounced ah-kwath-lon) series normally kicks off at the end of May, and runs through the summer until the beginning of August. Races are held at Randolph pool, by Reid Park. Each race is an 800 yd swim followed by a 5K run. You will find these races are very low-key, and are very social events. Many athletes use these races as a mid-week speed workout, and a way to challenge themselves week to week on the same course. If you can swim 800 yds and travel 5K by foot afterwards, you can do this race! Don't worry about being "too slow." These races are great for getting experience, and there is no pressure. You can even do these races as a relay with a friend or family member.

The "championship race" is held as the final race, and you qualify for this race if you do at least 5 races in the series. This race is all about fun. In the past, the race has been changed up in wacky ways, so no one knows what to expect. You could be given the choice to eat a donut before swimming, gathering pipe cleaners off of fences for time bonuses, looking for tennis balls in bushes, etc. After the race is the awards ceremony, not only for age group winners but for special prizes as well. Sometimes all you have to do is improve your time the most to get a prize.

I have done this series for a few years, and the races are a ton of fun! I've put together the following tips for those that have never attended one of these races and would like more info on what to expect. Keep in mind that there may be minor changes from year to year. But on thing that is guaranteed is fun!

- Signups open at 6 PM and close at 6:45 PM, or until they reach race capacity (around 84 racers). Last year, quite a few of the races filled up, so definitely get there early to sign up. Some weeks have the option of racing on Monday or Wednesday night. You can do one or the other, but not both.
- Signups are at the front desk at Randolph pool. Each racer fills out a waiver, pays \$5, and puts down their name and estimated 800 yd swim time. You can change your swim time from week to week.
- Randolph pool has restrooms, showers, and dressing rooms if you need to change into your race clothes there.



- What to bring: towel, suit, goggles, cap, timing watch (if you want to pace yourself), flip flops, running shoes, socks (if you run with socks), hat (if you like to run with a hat), BodyGlide (if you need it) and anything else you normally use for a swim/run workout.
- There is a large grassy area by the pool (inside the fenced area) where people set up their transition area. Most bring towels to put down in the grass, and then put all of their transition stuff on their towel. Watch out for ants! You may want to bring an extra towel for your face if you like to do a quick towel off after the swim and before the run.
- Race starts at 7 PM, so there's usually some waiting time if you get there early. Bring some reading material, do a quick jog to warm- up, stretch, or just hang out and socialize with friends to pass the time. If any of the swimming lanes are open, you can go ahead and swim a bit before the race. If you wear your TTG shirt, Tri Girls are usually quick to find you and you'll have someone to chat with.
- Racers are organized by waves based on their estimated swim time. In years past there were 3 to 4 waves, usually called "slow," "medium-slow," and "fast." Each week the order of which group goes first gets changed, so one group isn't always stuck going first or last. If you get faster throughout the summer, you may even get bumped up a wave.
- At 7 PM they will call the first wave. The first 20 people or so will have their name called followed by a number. Remember your number! They will have bodymarkers there who will write your number on your arms at that time. No number belts are needed for this race. A few minutes later they will call the second wave list of names and numbers, and so on.
- Racers line up in consecutive order, with 3-4 people to a lane. The people in the lane figure out amongst themselves who should go first, next, and last. At the start the first racer goes, then 10 seconds later the second, goes, and the next 10 seconds after that. Everyone circle swims, and stays to the right of the lane. There is a little bit of room to pass in the middle of the lane, or at the wall when turning around.
- Be sure to count your laps, as there is no lap counter like at some of the Tucson tris. Or you can get a friend to help you count. 800 yds is 32 laps (the pool is 25 yds long). Personally, I keep track of everything every 50 yds. So I repeat over in my head: 50, 50, 50, (turn at the wall), 100, 100, 100, etc. I also like to get my 100 yd split times on my watch, so when I push off from the wall I'll hit the split



button under water as I'm kicking, then just recall the data after the race to see where I faded in the 800 yds and such.

- If you're in one of the end lanes, you're lucky as you can use the ladder to get out. Everyone else has to do a pull-up to get out of the pool. It's not as bad as Hillenbrand, but it's still a pull-up.
- Just a few steps away from the pool is the grassy transition area, where you can get your run stuff on and head out. They will have the large gates to the pool on the east end open to get to the run course.
- The run course usually follows the paved jogging path that goes around Randolph park. Racers usually go north past the tennis courts, then west past the golf course, then south near the baseball park (may be subject to change). There is a turnaround marked on the paved path in chalk, and runners go back the way they came.
- Carry any water/nutrition with you that you want on the run, as there are no aid stations. There are goodies and refreshments at the finish though. There are also drinking fountains along the paved path on the course.
- The finish line is by the pool parking lot. Be sure to let the timekeepers know if you started as the 1st, 2nd, or 3rd swimmer so they can subtract start times. Be sure to thank the timekeeping volunteers! Then proceed to the refreshment table, where they usually have water, fruit, and cookies as post-race goodies. Things usually wrap up around 9 PM.
- Races may get canceled due to monsoon storms and lightning.
- One last tip: You'll notice at Randolph there are a ton of signs mentioning to not leave valuables in your car. Especially don't leave bags in plain view in your car because windows do get smashed and bags get stolen.

Results, updates, and info about the series are posted on <http://www.swimandrun.com> . They also have kid's races available.

Hope to see some of you there!