

TRIATHLON

THE STAGES

1. SWIM
1500m: Mass start from a pontoon at the Serpentine, a lake in Hyde Park.



2. CYCLE
43km: Athletes complete seven laps of a 6.137km scenic course through Hyde Park and past Buckingham Palace.



3. RUN
10km: Four laps of 2.5km course which loops around the Serpentine, finishing where the event started.

TRANSITION AREA

■ Transitions between the swim, bike and run are part of the race — crucial seconds can be gained or lost in the transition area.
■ Competitors leave their bike and running shoes in the transition zone.
■ After the swim leg they remove their wetsuits, put on their bike helmets, push their bikes out of the transition zone and then leap aboard. Shoes are already attached to the pedals.
■ On their return, they replace the bike in its designated rack, change into running shoes and set off on the final leg.

Started in the US as an alternative to track training, triathlon is now a measure of our supreme athletes



Triathlon is a demanding sport comprising swimming, cycling and running. It was created in the 1970s and made its Olympic debut at Sydney 2000 — a rapid rise considering the first official world championships were held only in 1989.

The San Diego Track Club lays claim to inventing the sport and, today, more than 120 nations are affiliated with the International Triathlon Union.

AT THE GAMES

There are 55 male and 55 female competitors in London. Each country is limited to six athletes (three men, three women). The women's triathlon was held on Saturday, and the men are set to compete tomorrow.

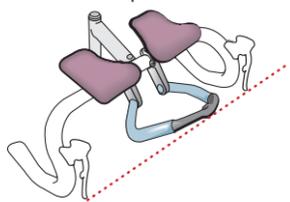
THE DO'S & DON'TS

Swimming

■ Competitors may use any stroke to propel themselves through the water.
■ They cannot use artificial propulsion devices such as fins, paddles or flotation equipment.

Cycling

■ Riders can not cycle in the transition area.
■ Competitors must not block other athletes while riding.
■ Cycling helmets are compulsory.
■ Drafting is allowed in the Olympic Games.
■ Only traditional drop handlebars (below) are permitted. Clip-ons and elbow pads are permitted. Handlebars must not extend past brake levers.



Running

■ Competitors may run or walk; may not crawl; may not run with bare feet or a bare torso.
■ Hats and visors can be worn.
■ Electronic listening devices such as mobile phones are not allowed.



FACT FILE

Going into London 2012, Australia led the Olympic medal tally in triathlon with a total of four medals from the three Games it has been contested. All were won by female athletes. They include Emma Snowsill's 2008 gold, as well as two silvers and a bronze.

SWIM GEAR

Competitors must wear a swim cap provided by the race organisation. Goggles and nose clips are allowed.

WETSUITS

■ All competitors wear wetsuits which are allowed under international rules if the water temperature is under 20C.
■ Wetsuits give extra buoyancy and can improve a swimmer's time by 40 seconds over 1500m. Wetsuits must not be thicker than 5mm.

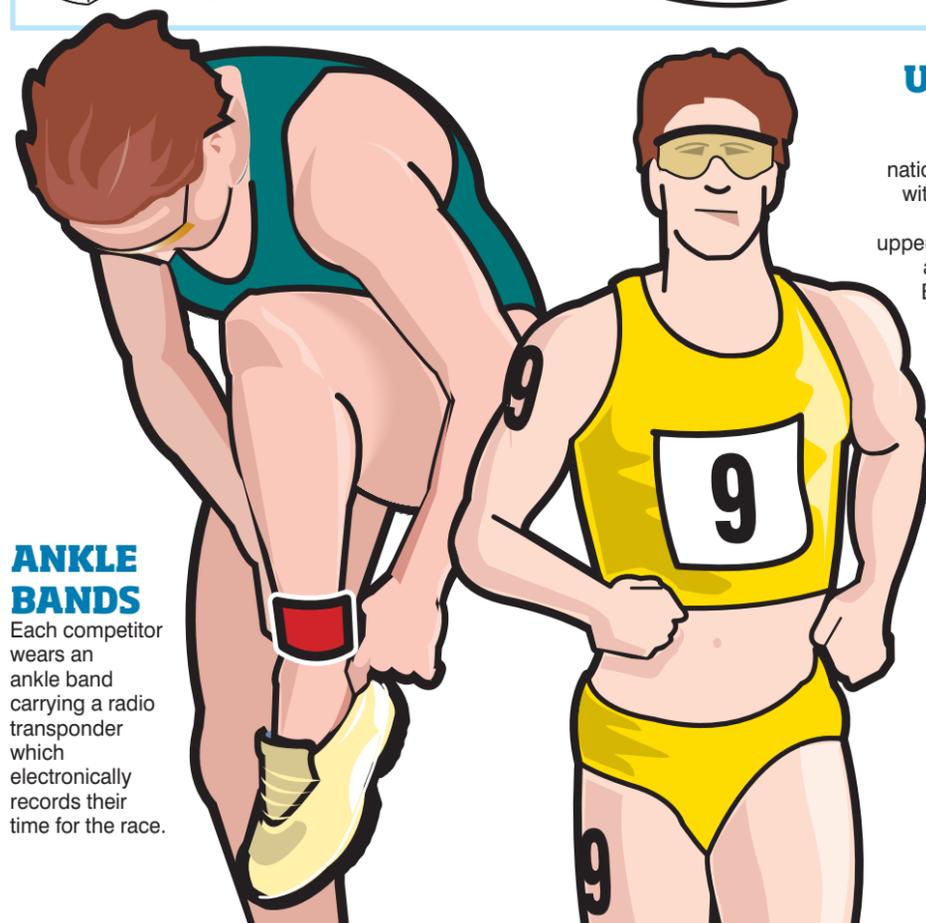
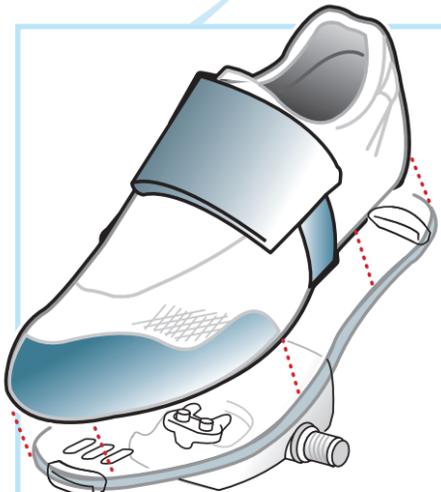
SHOES

Cycling shoe

Shoe is attached to the pedal via a cleat — a piece of metal attached to the sole of the shoe to prevent slipping.

Running shoe

Laces are elastic, with no need for tying. No socks are worn so the inner is very cushioned.



ANKLE BANDS

Each competitor wears an ankle band carrying a radio transponder which electronically records their time for the race.

UNIFORM & NUMBERS

Athletes wear their nation's chosen colours, with their surname and country code on the upper chest and buttocks areas of the uniform. Body decal numbers are also applied to each arm and leg.