

transition fitness

MY FAVORITE WORKOUT

Ben Collins



STRENGTH WORKOUT

Iliotibial Band Stretch

With an engineering degree from Columbia University, aspirations of med school and a multi-megawatt smile, Ben Collins is quite the catch. Add the 2007 USA Triathlon age-group national championship overall title to his pedigree and it's a wonder the 24-year-old isn't swarmed by women—yet. Collins got serious about triathlon last year, finishing top amateur at five races and winning his age group at USAT Nationals, which earned him All-American honors. This year, Collins has only improved, finishing second overall at Hawaii's Lavaman Triathlon and fourth amateur at Hy-Vee Triathlon before dominating USAT age-group Nationals. But despite his recent success, the Seattle native misses the motivational support his former Columbia swimming teammates provided. To get in his social kicks, Collins completes this fun but intense bike-run brick with his best tri buddies.

THE WORKOUT

Collins' gang heads to a moderate hill that takes five to 10 minutes to climb and rides up and down as many times as possible for one hour. The most important rule of the ride: You must cheer for your training mates every time you make a pass. Switch gears to hold a high cadence the first hill, changing to 65 to 70 rpms for the next interval—try to keep your cadence consistent for the entire climb. After hitting a range of gears, the posse parks the bikes and runs 0.5 to 1km up the same hill for 40 minutes, taking two minutes rest between laps so everyone can recover and regroup.

WHY IT WORKS FOR ME

"When your muscles burn and it gets hard to breathe, cheering harder gets you through it," says Collins. "Plus, the quick bike-run shift is great for practicing transitions"

MAKE IT YOUR OWN

Whether you rally 20 people or two, a cheerleader will make the workout more effective and fun. On the bike, Collins recommends pushing hard to maintain your target cadence and staying in the aero position when climbing. For the run, go hard uphill and stay loose on the descent. Finally, says Collins, keep it lighthearted: "Workouts are always more effective when you're having fun." —MELAINA JUNTU

{ HEALTH TIP } Lose the lenses

If there was ever a reason to wear goggles over contact lenses, here it is: Research shows that donning soft contacts during swim workouts increases your risk of eye infection. According to Reza Farahani, therapeutic optometrist at the University of Texas Medical School-Houston, soft lenses can be a reservoir of toxicity. When submerged, lenses harbor water—and the harmful chemicals and troublemaking microorganisms that live in it. The most common contact-invading menace is *Acanthamoeba*, a microscopic beast that thrives in swimming pools, lakes and reservoirs. When this single-celled pest invades the cornea, it can trigger keratitis, a serious eye infection that causes pain, redness and even eventual blindness. In some cases, the infection breaks down corneal tissue, leading to an ulcer. Farahani recommends always wearing goggles when swimming, and if your lenses do come in contact with the water, be sure to clean and disinfect them with fresh solution and thoroughly rinse your storage case. —M.J.

Have you ever experienced a pull in your knee or sharp pain in your hip when walking up or down stairs? Do you have tightness on the outside of your thigh while running or cycling? The pain is most likely due to a tight iliotibial band, which can cause the debilitating condition known as ITBS, or iliotibial band syndrome, common among endurance athletes. But you can prevent or remedy many cases of ITBS by employing a frequent and effective stretching regime.

The IT band is a wide, fibrous thickening of connective tissue that extends from the pelvis across the hip to the knee joint. Its primary function is to control lateral movement of the leg when the hip and knee flex or extend. With every pedal stroke or foot strike, the IT band works to keep your leg in line and deliver more power to your ride or propulsion to your toe-off. Energy

lost to lateral motion sacrifices your forward speed, so a strong and flexible IT band can improve running and cycling speed, in addition to preventing days off and missed workouts due to tightness and pain.

By performing this simple stretch two to three times daily, you can help ward off the unfortunately all-too-common ITBS. —ABBY RUBY, CTS EXPERT COACH, Carmichael Training Systems, Inc. (trainright.com)

HOW TO STRETCH:

- 1) Stand upright with your arms at your sides. Cross your right leg in front of your left leg, keeping your feet close together.
- 2) Transfer all your weight to your left leg, so that your right leg is not grounded.
- 3) Lean into your left hip. If need be, place your hand lightly on a desk, chair or table or up against a wall to help keep balance.



- 4) Rock your hips forward or backward until you can feel the stretch on the outside of your left leg. Hold the stretch for 15 to 30 seconds before switching to the other side.

- 5) Repeat the stretch two to three times daily.