

Optimizing Race Performance: Be in the Moment

David Glover

"Yesterday is history. Tomorrow is a mystery. And today? Today is a gift. That's why we call it the present."

- Babatunde Olatunji

A powerful piece of advice came from a presentation given by 6x Hawaii Ironman World Champion David Scott. It was simply: "Be in the moment." In other words, focus on what you can do in the here and now instead of dwelling on what has already happened or what might happen in the future.

Starting the run during the Vineman Full Iron-distance Triathlon in 2006, I was 1.5 minutes behind the current race leader, Bob Shebest. I confidently expected to catch him within the first few miles then go onto take the lead and win the race.

To my surprise, the pass came much later in the run than expected, as it was not until mile ten that I caught Bob and passed him to take the lead. He held on to my feet for a few minutes but then slowed down. By the halfway point three miles later, he was more than a minute back and falling further. My thinking shifted from being in the moment to how I would take the win as he fell farther and farther back. I lost my focus on the "now" to focus on a desired future come.

I always find it amusing how a race, like life, can change suddenly and dramatically – one minute you're on top of the world winning and nothing can go wrong then the next moment reality strikes and you're struggling to even move forward.

When Bob re-passed me at mile 20, I could not respond. We talked for a few seconds, but I could only watch in my low blood sugar haze as he took my spot on top of the world and I metaphorically fell off a cliff. If I had stayed present and better monitored my pacing and caloric intake, the race might have had a different outcome than second place for me.

I closely link "being in the moment" or "being present" with a state called "flow." *Flow* author, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, describes flow as, "the state in which people are so involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter; the experience itself is so enjoyable that people will do it even at great cost, for the sheer sake of doing it." Csikszentmihalyi goes on to say that, "The best moments occur when a person's body or mind is stretched to its limits in a voluntary effort to accomplish something difficult or worthwhile. Optimal experience is thus something we can make happen."

By focusing on the moment rather than regretting the past or anticipating an uncertain future, we can better achieve an optimal experience and our race goals, whether this goal is to finish a sprint race or win an Ironman.

If "being in the moment," worked for 6x Ironman World Champion Dave Scott, then it should be a good strategy for the rest of us mortals.

Author of *Full Time & Sub-Nine: Fitting Iron Distance Training into Everyday Life*, David dabbles extensively in endurance sports as a professional triathlete, coach, writer and race director. He has helped hundreds of individuals through coaching, educational seminars and eBooks. As an athlete, his accolades include an 8:51 Ironman PR and being the 2007 inductee into the Vineman Hall of Fame. For more information about David, please visit: www.davidglover.net. For more information about his business coaching services, please visit: www.enduranceworks.net.