

## Get mind to tell body who's boss

By Bill Shaw

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**A**s I crossed the Highway 36 bridge running east back to Freeport in the sixth mile of an 8.1-miler Saturday morning, I turned around a variety of topics in my head for this week's column. I thought again about goals and motivation and what keeps me on the road at 68.

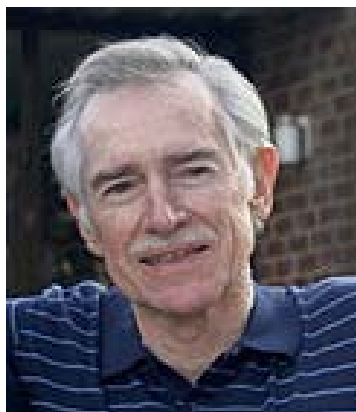
I did my first "brick" of the year Tuesday, an 11-mile bike ride followed by a 5-mile run; I hit the pool last week for the first time since October to swim.

I was motivated to begin my bricks and to hit the pool by my goal of finishing my first sprint triathlon of the year, my 26th overall, in Athens, Texas, on March 8. Fear might be the better word, fear of failure. I always fear I shall not finish because my old body might fail me. In the case of a triathlon, I worry about a flat tire or a mechanical failure of my bicycle.

My motivation is based on personal discipline. I did not want to go out for that 8-miler Saturday when the alarm went off. I hit the street because of my discipline. I have disciplined my mind to put aside the aches and pains of age and to silence the voice within that says, "Just lie in

bed a while, you can worry about that triathlon tomorrow."

"You have to make the mind run the body," said Gen. George S. Patton, a 1912 Olympian. "Never let the body tell the mind what to do. The body will always give up. It is always tired morning, noon, and night. But the body is never tired



if the mind is not tired.

When you were younger, the mind could make you dance all night, and the body never tired.

... You've always got to make the mind take over and keep going."

When I was younger, I could dance all night and never tire.

The same thing applies to writing. For a writer, there is no such thing as "writer's block." I sit down at the keyboard, and my mind silences the sounds of negative thoughts and fears. I crunch out the columns and articles, just as I am doing right now after an 8-mile run.

The first mile off my bike in my brick Tuesday was brutal. My back hurt — pain in my sciatic nerve from my buttocks to my foot made me almost hobble. My body said, "OK, Bill, why don't you stop and walk. This is too painful. If you don't stop, why don't you settle for just for a mile or so? You can run 3 miles next

week after your brick."

My mind and discipline kicked in. I argued with my body, "Look, it will get better after the first half-mile or mile. I'm not stopping, and you can't make me."

I went on to finish not only the scheduled 3 miles, but I showed my body what it could do by running 5.

I believe, though I have no scientific proof or studies to cite, that some athletes have good genes and others have genetic discipline. I don't think I learned discipline because as a young man I lacked the discipline to run and exercise regularly. Perhaps discipline, like wisdom, comes with age.

Maybe those who don't have it now will never have it, just as those of us who have no speed in the competitive field never had it and never will.

In your training, discover and cultivate discipline within, a discipline that makes your mind to say "Hush!" to a body that says "You can't do this. Why don't you just give up? You will never be nothing more than a mediocre, miserable, middle-to-end-of-the-packer. Why do you embarrass yourself for another dumb T-shirt?"

**Bill Shaw's running column appears every other Monday in *The Facts*.**