What was the best piece of advice you've received in your career?

Hunter Kemper: Enjoy the race as it comes, enjoy the whole process and enjoy the journey of what it is that you're trying to do. As a beginner, it's important to set goals. Think about why you're doing a triathlon for the first time. Is it to stay fit and be healthy? Is it to accomplish a bigger goal? Is it to fulfill a lifelong dream? Whatever that race is that you have planned, start off the year thinking about that, but enjoy the whole process. If you focus too much on the destination and it doesn't go the way you want or things happen, you're going to maybe not be in a good place afterward and not really enjoy it.

It took me a long time to learn, but at my third Olympic Games in 2008, I felt like I enjoyed the entire process of the Games so much more. So when I finished in seventh place, it meant so much more to me. I was really happy about that because of all that I'd gone through. I'd gone through a lot of difficult, trying times. In Athens in 2004, I was a little too serious. I was 28 years old and people were telling me, "nope’s the time — you’re fifth in the world. You can get a medal." It was too overwhelming. So enjoy the journey and each and every day just be very blessed that you’re out there.

Obviously you’ve had some frustrations with injuries the past couple years. What can you tell people about how to deal when things don’t go as planned — when you have injuries or other setbacks.

Hunter Kemper: Overcoming obstacles is a lesson that many people can learn from, and I’ve definitely had my share since the last Olympics in 2008. I had a sports hernia injury in 2008. In 2009, I was dealing with a lot of SI joint issues, and this past year I had a stress fracture in my pelvis and broke my collarbone. But the thing about it is when you go through those valleys and rough times, when you come through them and come out on the other side and get to realize your goal and finish the race, it’s so much more fulfilling and more rewarding that you’ve overcome that.

So when you’re going through difficult times in a race or in training, realize that everyone has setbacks. We define ourselves not necessarily through what we accomplish but how we react and how we overcome adversity. That’s very important and no one goes through life without any adversity. That’s what life is about — overcoming whatever’s in your way. Hopefully I’ll have a pretty good story to tell, making my fourth Olympic Games and this time actually coming home with some hardware.

What do you remember most about your early triathlon days, back when you were racing IronKids?

Hunter Kemper: I did my first triathlon in 1986 when I was 10 years old. I did a kids race that was a 100-meter swim, 5k bike and 1k run, and it took me 17 minutes. I didn’t really know what to expect, so that eliminated a lot of the nerves because I really didn’t know what was going to come as a kid. I knew how to swim, so that wasn’t a problem. It was just the biking and running and figuring out the transitions — how do you put the shirt on when you’re wet and all this. I enjoyed it.

What’s the single most important advice you’d give a beginner triathlete?

Hunter Kemper: Get involved with your local community — running clubs, a cycling group or a masters swim team — that you can be a part of and get your friends doing what it is that you love to do would be great for encouragement and enjoyment. Also, work on whatever discipline scares you the most — usually it’s the swim. Get comfortable in the open water. Or take the lane ropes out of the pool or swim in a pool that doesn’t have lane ropes so that you feel more like you’re in an open body. For cycling, make sure that you get your fit and positioning correct. Go to your local bike shop and get properly fitted. For running, make sure that you’re properly fitted with the right shoes and also get a gait analysis.

About the beginner:

Rachel Scott: So Mr. Three Time, beginners are known for making some embarrassing training or racing mistakes. What is your most embarrassing triathlon moment?

Hunter Kemper: One of mine would be the fact that I didn’t hydrate enough during one of my races. It was a super-sprint race back in 1998. I was in Columbus, Ohio, for a swim-bike-run race that you repeated three times. By the time I got to the last run, I came through transition and had a mile to go and they’re like, ‘whoa, whoa, whoa, do you need some help?’ And I’m thinking, ‘are you serious?’ They were asking me if I was going to make it. I guess I looked really flushed, pale and very dehydrated. I’m pale as it is, but I was even more ghostly pale.

That was a really embarrassing moment for me because I kind of hobbled across the line and had to get two IVs, and it was humiliating. I succumbed to the heat and humidity there, and I learned that never again will I not drink on the bike. If you are needing extra water bottles, don’t be afraid to ask your fellow competitors out there on the race course if they could spare some extra water.

About the elite:

Hunter Kemper is a three-time Olympian and member of the USA Triathlon National Team. Visit www.hunterkemper.com to learn more about Kemper and his charity, the A-T Children’s Project.

Rachel Scott completed her first triathlon in 2008 but has mostly focused on bike racing until recently. “The bike is by far my favorite leg, but the swim has and always will be my weak point,” Scott said. As a beginner, Rachel said swimming lessons that incorporate open-water training sessions help her gain confidence and joining a training group helps to keep her motivated throughout the year. Rachel plans to compete with Tribella in 2011, the first women’s specific multisport shop of its kind, in sprint and intermediate distance triathlons, XTERRA off-road triathlons, and race on Tribella’s competitive road cycling team.