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Intermediate Bike Training News

Create a Sustainable Healthy Lifestyle

October 12, 2006

Dear Rick,

The newsletters are coming fast and furious because I'm trying to get back in synch with my normal Tuesday release. But October is a confusing time. At Midlife Cycling we are starting the new training season while the Rocky Mountain Cycling Club is still doing some big rides. Again, I chose Oct 1st as the season start to better prepare our members for ski season. Nov 1st would have been too late for cyclists to rebuild their hamstring muscles and novices to build enough base conditioning for skiing.

Last issue I discussed how cyclists of all abilities work through the Midlife Cycling training. Visit the [Newsletter Archive - Oct 7th edition](#) - at www.midlifecycling.com if you missed that discussion.

This issue I would like to discuss how people of various levels of conditioning, or dealing with certain medical issues, can work with Midlife Cycling. I'm still hearing from people who have been following the newsletter but haven't ridden with us because they are afraid of keeping up. I beg you to spend the \$90 and ride with me one-on-one or at least call me just to talk. I won't train you over the phone but I love to talk cycling and assure you that I can put your worse fears to rest.

The Midlife Cycling program is based on the best practices of USA Cycling, American Council on Exercise, and other respected fitness sources. However, Midlife Cycling deviates significantly in our approach to long-term health and how we achieve rapid fitness gains with minimal risk of injury or illness.

You may be skeptical or disagree with our approach. That's normal. No new ideas go unchallenged. Due to the limited space I can't explain a lot of things in detail. So at least try to understand the broad idea of what I'm presenting and feel free to contact me directly for more information.

As an alternative to the scheduled RMCC ride we will be riding out of the Northglenn (120th & Huron) Park and Ride at 9:45 on Saturday. This will be a relatively flat 50 mile route. Have a great week.

Rick Russon

Current athletes...



The foundation of the Midlife Cycling program is that we believe the key to sustainable health and fitness is the quality of your endurance base. This base is critical to riding long distances comfortably or recovering from more intense short efforts.

I frequently hear cyclists talking about how they need to build more strength to climb better or go faster. Well my peak power is over 750 watts and I can leg press four times my body weight for 50 reps. Yet, there are still numerous RMCC cyclists who leave me in the dust on climbs or long rides even though

they don't have my strength to weight ratio.

When I've tested them on the trainer or heard their power numbers their peak power is similar or less. However, their average sustainable power is 1 1/2 - 2 times what I can maintain. So, obviously greater strength is not the reason they outride me. It is their endurance at higher power.

So how to gain that endurance? Ride more long rides. The current fitness trend is to develop "product" to meet public demand for exercise that takes less time. Most "experts" have forgotten the first thing you learn in Physiology 101 - muscle adaptation is SPECIFIC. Short intense exercise trains you to go fast over short distances.

It would take many more pages to discuss how intense exercise thickens muscle fibers and develops Fast Twitch type fibers. While less-intense endurance exercise develops Slow Twitch (aerobic) fibers, mitochondria density, capillaries, and more. You're probably thinking this means riding long distances at high intensities. Unfortunately, there is always a point of diminishing returns.

The onset of blood lactate accumulation (OBLA) will shut down your muscles no matter how trained you are. While advanced cyclists spend a higher percentage of time at Lactate Threshold that doesn't mean they do it all at once. The key to their ability is that they have highly developed circulatory, respiratory, and other systems to remove and process the metabolic waste products. And that is done by training at lower intensities for a long time. Having that solid base, these riders are able to do an intense effort for several minutes, recover quickly, and do another one. They do more intervals at higher intensities than a cyclist with a poor base. So build a good base before you start working on other parts of your riding.

[Archives...](#)

Couch Potatoes...



Regardless of who is right about fitness technique, I argue that the conventional approach to fitness is a failure when you look at it from a high level. The focus has been on how people should exercise and not on getting them to start exercising. That's why we have a health and fitness epidemic.

No matter how short and intense an exercise program is it will only work for a small percentage of people. I don't think many people like repetitive exercise routines. With shrinking leisure time, I don't think they want to spend it staring at a wall indoors. And, I don't think many people enjoy always being fatigued or sore from routines that require taking muscles to exhaustion.

At Midlife Cycling we believe that you can make rapid gains in fitness doing something pleasant. I just happened to base this program on cycling because it is convenient. If we lived at the ocean it would be Midlife Kayaking. Up in the mountains it might be Midlife Hiking/Snow Shoeing/Skiing.

We start with things like doing a little exercise while you are watching the news. Take stairs and walk more during the day. We modify interesting rides on weekends to maximize fitness gains. We don't just train in hopes of someday riding somewhere interesting. Finally, we don't diet to lose weight. We eat well to avoid losing too much weight due to our active lifestyles. Notice how gaining fitness becomes an extension of our daily lifestyle rather than another job added to our lives.

Regarding, intensity I like to use the example of drywalling, masonry, package delivery and other physical work. These jobs don't allow hard work one day with rest the next. These people lay brick or set wallboard all day, every day of their lives. And, they have tremendous endurance - just not cycling specific.

Weight Control...



Ironically, the most effective path to weight control is not trying to lose weight or dieting. I believe it is better to base your health on "thriving rather than depriving."

Diets have limited effectiveness. Eventually, you will want to eat something yummy. Many other countries eat very well yet don't have an obesity problem. As I've mentioned numerous times before I want you to focus on portion control. You can't gain any more weight than what you eat. Regardless of what the diet industry claims, the physics Law of Mass Conservation applies to all "fermionic" matter (physical vs. things like

radiation).

If that's not complex enough for you let's talk chemistry. The body does not liberate much fat when it thinks it is starving. The main priority of your body is to keep your brain alive. Based on studies of POWs and other starving people, when you lack food your body starts conserving energy for your brain. First it reduces muscle mass because muscles burn a lot of energy. Next it starts reducing the abdominal organs because there is less food and waste to process. Finally, it gets around to adipose (fat) tissue.

So maintaining an adequate intake of carbohydrate accomplishes two things: 1) it convinces your body that food is plentiful so less need to store it and 2) fatty acid molecules ride on glucose molecules. It is the reason for the expression that "fat burns in the flame of carbohydrate." Notice that I said adequate. EXCESS carbohydrate will be stored as fat.

Finally, don't worry about weight loss. What I have seen is that people start losing inches but often stay at the same weight. Then they start feeling better and have more stamina. Eventually, the weight starts coming off as they become fit and their "Resting Metabolic Rate" increases. So don't beat yourself up jumping on the scale every day. Just keep asking yourself if you feel better this week than last. And, just for planning, we believe a loss of one pound per week is about the maximum that won't affect your performance.

Diabetes and other illness...

Regardless of the exercise value, cycling is a great opportunity to get away from stressful activities and do something simple while being in the outdoors. Even if you want to move on to other sports eventually, you can start out with the low/no impact of cycling to build your initial fitness.

Diabetes is a terrible disease but it can be controlled in a lot of cases. Drugs an insulin cost a lot of money each month even with insurance. While you may not be able to eliminate drug therapy completely you may be able to reduce it considerably.

My training partner is a type II. When he started to ride with me several years ago the doctors were about to remove veins from his legs. To date he has lost about 100 lbs, vericose veins are gone for the most part, and he is off all medications except at night. While riding burns off a lot of excess glucose in his blood we really worked to dial in his nutrition.

It is normal for diabetics to reduce carbohydrate intake. But, done incorrectly, that can also affect stamina. We have found in this particular case that increasing protein provides a consistent level of fuel for cycling. Some nutritionists will argue that protein provides an insignificant contribution of energy during athletics. However, they are generally not talking about diabetics or addressing the needs of activities lasting longer than 1-2 hours.

I don't know about you but the affordability of being sick is now out of my reach. The insurance companies just don't want to pay for long-term drug therapies any more. Looks like the only

practical, low-cost solution for most of us is staying fit and not getting sick.

Recovery from Injuries...

Cycling is a great way to rebuild strength and flexibility after an injury. With the CompuTrainer cycling computer we can rebuild fitness specific to your bicycle. Rather than guess how your legs are recovering we can actually quantify what's happening. This is best explained by example so read the ACL case study below.

[Read the ACL case study...](#)

Quick Links...

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