

[<Back](#) [Print](#)

Intermediate Bike Training News

Create a Sustainable Healthy Lifestyle

February 7, 2007

Dear Rick,

The nightmare continues! It is hard to determine exactly what the weather will be this weekend. Rides start at 10:45 am so you can make your riding decision Sat or Sun morning. People have sent me e-mails that they are riding their fat-tire bikes. I've even been tempted to bring out the cross-bike. However, a few words of caution are in order.

At Midlife Cycling we ride for long-term health and not competition. So, for me, the benefits of riding in marginal weather do not merit the risk of hidden ice, sand, potholes, and other road hazards. I think the time is better spent on core exercises, Pilates, Power Pump, weight training, and even indoor cycling. If you can hit the high country for cross-country skiing or snowshoeing, that's even better.

This weather will break soon. There is plenty of time to build an endurance base for the big public rides in June and July. But that is not permission to sit around doing nothing until spring. Remember, there is no "off season" for Midlife Cycling. We just change our activities throughout the year.

In another sign that the Midlife Cycling philosophy is in tune with public health issues you may have seen that Wal-mart and the SEIU are teaming together to change health care in America. The President of SEIU said it best "It is time to admit that the employer based health care is dead." That means that corporations and government are putting the pressure on all of us to practice healthier living habits. The days of unlimited prescription drugs and home medical equipment courtesy of group insurance are drawing to an end. Exercise is the new drug of choice for good health. But instead of exercising like a hamster and staring at a health club wall for hours please participate in and help us promote cycling as a fun way to build a sustainable healthy lifestyle.



Rick Russon

On the Road...



The new Rocky Mountain Cycling Club schedule has been printed. Grab one at the next ride or at your local bike shop. I applaud those of you who are braving the elements and riding. A lot of us are getting cabin fever.

A common mistake is to start your road riding as an extension of your spin classes. As I've mentioned before, 45 minutes of high-intensity, in and out of the saddle riding trains a completely different energy system than what we need for long distance riding.

The RMCC ride routes will be 30-50 miles through February and March. However, Dan and I will be preparing for the April Populaires. These events ramp up in mileage quite quickly. Also, the Horsetooth and Estes Populaires are a little more challenging than their 75 miles would suggest. So

we will be deviating from the RMCC schedule and throwing in a 68, 85, and a few 100 mile rides in these months.

[Midlife Cycling website...](#)

Nike 10/12



With extreme disappointment I have to announce that the Livestrong Challenge will not be coming back to Denver this year. Unfortunately, I have not been privy to the reason for the cancellation. Dan and I will focus on training for the RMCC Brevet series if any of you are interested in riding with us. If there is enough interest I may consider putting together a training program up to the 300K distance. For longer distances I'll turn you over to the more experienced riders in RMCC.

Indoor Training...



I will admit that I have no patience for indoor aerobic training. I will also admit that I'm not a fan of most spin classes. But you can get some benefit from indoor training if you do it right.

My mountain biking friends and road racing buddies like spin classes. I think the low-cadence, out of the saddle, high-intensity effort is a close match to their actual riding conditions. For endurance riding you should focus on increasing your cadence and developing a smooth pedaling technique - pedaling in circles as they say. On those rare occasions that I do ride the trainer, I focus on the above and on SUSTAINABLE power.

Sustainable power is the most important capability for riding well with RMCC. We are in a constant climb for thousands of feet on a lot of our rides. Standing out of the saddle is very inefficient. And the length of time you can do it is insignificant compared to how long most climbs last. However, it is useful to stand on a long climb occasionally to stretch your legs.

If you've been following this newsletter for a while or look back in the archives you'll notice that I don't talk about heart rate training (HRT) or rating of perceived exertion (RPE) very much. But that is a discussion for another day. Power is a much more accurate parameter to measure and I hope the power meters will drop in price someday. Fortunately, you can use power indoors on the Lifecycle and Precor bikes for free.

Here is an example of how I use power. Under ideal conditions I can hold 725 watts for about 10 seconds. But I can only sustain around 225 watts for any length of time. My training partner, Dan, and other local racers I've observed can hold around 350 watts for over an hour. So, like in weight training, I'll ride at a certain wattage for a few hundred miles then push it up slightly every so often throughout the season.

Classroom...

Seems every fitness expert comes out of the shadows at the beginning of the year. There is just an over-abundance of articles. A lot of it is the same warmed-over advice from years past. The trend is yet-again short and intense. To me it is reaching the level of absurdity.



The worse advice I've seen is to do plyometrics before a ride. Most recreational athletes don't have the conditioning to do plyometrics let alone do them with cold muscles. Another absurd article was to build a base with short tempo rides instead of longer endurance rides. Unfortunately, anyone who has studied cycling physiology knows that tempo rides train the glucose system rather than the fatty acid system. I'll admit that you will build a base that is adequate for 20-40 mile club rides. But don't be fooled into thinking that will give you the base for riding with RMCC or doing things like the Triple Bypass. It has taken a lot of us 3-5 years of riding 4000 miles or more per year to build our bases.

Bottom line, my advice is that most things in life are rather simple. When you study elite athletes you'll find that behind all the "sound bite" articles about their training lies hours and hours of boring practice of the fundamentals of their sport. The challenge is that most of us don't have the discipline or interest to train consistently day in and day out. As they say "life gets in the way" for most of us.

So just relax and do the best you can. Do a few core exercises and ride as much as you can each week. Don't turn fitness into a job.

[Free papers...](#)

Nutrition...



I hope that you've recovered from the holidays. And I hope that recovery doesn't include any crash diets. My advice for people who want to loose weight is to focus on becoming more active and work on stamina. Typically, I've seen muscle tone improve and inches lost around the waist long before any actual weight reduction occurs. And, really better conditioning is the real goal.

Again, taking the simplistic approach, eat small meals frequently and watch portions. Forget miracle pills and extreme diets. They are not sustainable and very unhealthy. Another absurd article I read this month is that diet alone will result in as much weight loss as a program of diet and exercise. Yes, you'll lose weight but you'll have the physical fitness of a house plant.

Medical supervision is recommended if you are extremely heavy and haven't exercised in quite a while. You really need to have diet monitored and your exertion levels brought up under supervised conditions. But once the doctor turns you loose the Midlife Cycling program can provide the fellowship and guidance to help you maintain and improve your efforts.

Coming soon... I have had talks with Registered Dietitian and fellow USA Cycling Coach Michael Koons. He is offering detailed nutritional guidance at a reduced price to RMCC and Midlife Cycling members. And, he will soon be contributing articles to this newsletter.

One of the immediate services we identified is the Resting Metabolic Rate test. If you want to reduce your caloric intake to an absolute minimum you should determine what that level is with the RMR test. A lot of the diets pick an arbitrary level like 1500 calories per day. The problem is that if this is below your RMR for any length of time your body will think it is starving and actually may start to catabolize lean muscle and build fat stores to protect itself. Michael works out of 50/50 Fitness who I will discuss in the next newsletter after we have worked out the details of our relationship.

Quick Links...

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