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## Intermediate Bike Training News

Create a Sustainable Healthy Lifestyle

June 18, 2007

**Dear Rick,**

Well, I have decided to come out of hiding. It has been a frustrating year for training. It's not that it has been impossible to train. The problem is that afternoon showers discourage riding after work. And, it seems to only happen on days my schedule permits me to ride. At this time in the season I'm at about 1/4 of my normal mileage.

The good news is that I'm climbing hills riding well in the 60-80 mile range. I've had several good rides at the 200K (130 mi) range. I rode them mainly to help build base mileage fast. But even with several years of riding the RMCC schedule, a solid winter workout, and selecting my rides carefully there is just no escaping the fact that I don't have enough miles in and my endurance is suffering. My speed drops off after 70-80 miles from 20 mph to 16-18 mph. And, even though I'm strong in the hills my knees feel some pre- strain soreness if I throw too much climbing at them.

The reason I bring all this up is that I see cyclists on every club ride who are disappointed when they get dropped on an RMCC ride. I'm having a rough season and I'M THE COACH. So don't despair. This newsletter will discuss how to have a good season without a lot of mileage. Have a great week.

Rick Russon

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### *On The Road...*



For you newbies, RMCC and Midlife Cycling are about endurance riding in the 80-130 mile range. This is not racing and 30-40 mile rides are what we drop DOWN to in the winter. There are always new cyclists who ride hard (22-25 mph) with us for 60-90 minutes only to burn out and watch us ride away at 20 mph for several hours more.

There is a tendency to think that the product of Volume x Intensity is a constant. In other words you shouldn't have to ride at all - if you can do it with infinite intensity. However, our bodies use three different energy substrates depending upon the intensity we are at. Fatty Acids for endurance.

Glucose for higher intensity. And Glycogen for all-out efforts. Training one system doesn't necessarily benefit the other two.

For our purposes we spend the majority of our time riding in the endurance zone. I like to use breathing as the key indicator because it depends upon the buildup of CO<sub>2</sub> in your blood. Heart Rate can be inaccurate as it is affected by what you eat, how tired you are, how hot it is, and more. The complaint you will hear is that "long, slow riding trains you to ride long and slow." Well, yes, that is exactly what we do. To ride over 50 miles you will be going rather slow compared to your maximum capability. But slow is relative. My slow is 18-20 mph which is a maximal speed for a lot of recreational cyclists. The intensity I want you to ride is where you can talk but can't sing - just hesitating every so often to catch up on your breathing. This is just below the fatty-acid/glucose crossover point. You still need some maximal efforts but a little goes a long way. So hammer the

small hills or break up a boring flat ride with a sprint every so often.

Hills are another area of difficulty for cyclists new to RMCC. We seem to have a club full of mountain goats. A common mistake is to head for the steepest hill to train on for "strength." The physiology of hills is the same as for flat terrain. Only the speed is different.

My saying is that if you can climb the first 100 feet of a hill then you have enough strength - you just don't have the endurance to maintain the climb. A lot of climbing is a matter of technique. The debate still rages on high vs low cadence among recreational cyclists. However, the physiology is quite clear and measurable. High cadence uses less energy. And, it puts less stress on joints, muscles, and tendons which is important if you are trying to avoid osteoarthritis in your later years. So find less steep hills to practice on. Try to ride in your endurance zone. Your speed in the hills will increase rapidly if you are patient and let it come at its own rate.

Steep, over 15% grades, are a matter of strength. Another debate is whether weight training benefits cyclists. The typical body building routines won't. But high rep, moderate weight routines do. I can put 3 1/2 to 4 times my body weight of load on my legs in the weight room where we can only put just a little over body weight on them when on the bike. They key is to remember that we do about 5000 single-leg leg presses an hour on the bike. So the normal three sets of 8 reps to exhaustion is a rather useless workout for our sport.

[Ride Schedule...](#)

### *Indoor training...*



With bright, sunny days who wants to train indoors? There are several reasons why we continue to train indoors. Cycling develops muscle strength imbalances in the legs between the quadriceps and hamstrings. This doesn't really matter until you decide to ski in the winter or go hiking one day - then pop goes the ACL. Some muscles aren't worked very much. And others, like the neck/shoulders/lower back are worked too much and need to be stretched. Core exercises, yoga, pilates, tai chi, and more are great supplements to your cycling. After all, we are cycling for overall health and not just cycling.

Regular readers know my contempt for spin classes. However, I also believe that "any exercise is better than no exercises." And, this point in the season is where the high intensity, interval training of indoor cycling can actually benefit your riding. Also, try the elliptical and rowing machines.

### *Food and Nutrition...*



I still see people showing up on rides with only one or two water bottles. At this level of riding nutrition is a major factor in your performance. I would go as far as saying that after a couple seasons nutrition is the only factor in your performance. As you become better conditioned your nutritional needs actually decrease for a given effort. But even the front of the club takes in between 500-1000 calories per hour during a ride. That's because as your conditioning improves you actually increase your riding effort to continually improve.

The baseline to start with is one or more large sport drink bottles and one or two gels per hour. As you ride longer and harder you can adjust your carbohydrate/protein ratio, experiment with real foods to get higher calorie densities, and find the right balance of liquid/solid food for your stomach comfort. In any case, you either eat/drink or you don't last long on an RMCC ride.

## Final Notes...

I'm still working up my personal ride schedule for July and August. I don't do all the club rides because I don't have the base to take as much climbing as presented in the schedule. We have some great rides coming up that you should be on the lookout for:

This weekend is the Copper Triangle ride. We will be going counter-clockwise to Vail, Minturn, and Leadville this time. Later in the season we will do it in the opposite direction.

July 22nd is our Mount Evans hill climb. Join us for an "Into Thin Air" adventure.

As the leaves begin to turn later in the year we would like to do the Memorial Day route that we had to cancel. This was to leave from Bergen Park, ride to Frisco, stay the night, do the Copper Triangle, stay another night in Frisco, then return the third day. If you would be interested in this ride please send me an e-mail at [rmmrusson@midlifecycling.com](mailto:rmmrusson@midlifecycling.com) so I can start a list. Our plan is to reserve a block of rooms and to have at least one support vehicle on the ride. Costs will be determined after we have a final head count.

## Quick Links...

- [Ride Schedule](#)
- [Rick's Ride Schedule](#)
- [Join RMCC Online](#)
- [Rocky Mountain Cycling Club](#)
- [Denver Bicycle Touring Club](#)

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Midlife Cycling LLC | 1579 W Briarwood Ave | Littleton | CO | 80120 -3632