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Intermediate Bike Training News

Create a Sustainable Healthy Lifestyle

February 12, 2008

Dear Rick,

We have a saying in the long-distance (>50 miles) cycling world - "It is not how fast you go, rather it is how little you slow down." In Colorado a 6 hour century ride is respectable for the average rider. This is about a 16 mph pace. A pace easily held by even beginning riders. The problem is that a lot of riders go out fast then fade at the end. Or, they rocket down hills for a few minutes then slog uphill at 6 mph for hours.

Another problem area is rest stops. A lot of us in RMCC aren't even considering our first stop until 60 miles out. Most public events have rest stops every 10 miles. If you stop 5 times before me, even for just 10 minutes, you will set me up to finish almost an hour ahead of you before the ride is even half over.

In golf, 90 strokes is a reasonable score for the weekend duffer. The best advice I ever received was to shoot for 5 on every hole. It is not the birdies and pars that give the novice a good score. Rather it is avoiding the 6-10 strokes on several holes per game. Likewise in cycling, it's not necessarily the speed on the flats and downhill that help your time but not slowing down much on rollers, hills, or the end of the ride.

For those of you who have read this newsletter for a couple of years you may say that I drone on and on about endurance training. Well I have seen, and continue to see, cyclists that are great riders - right up to when they fade about an hour out. Regardless of all the conflicting studies good you may read, long distance cyclists spend time in the saddle. If for no other reason than bike (butt) hardening and the mindset to ride for long hours.

I'm not saying that short distance riding is bad. Track racing is an amazing display of lactate tolerance. The 40K (25 mile) Time Trial is useful even for training. The CP-40 measurement is what I like to use to determine a cyclist's maximum continuous aerobic power output. No, short distance riding has its place. It is just not the focus of this program as there are lots of other training resources available to the 1-2 hour cyclist.

The short, intense "interval training" religion has become almost fanatical. Seems the world will never stop looking for the elusive get fit or rich quick schemes. I think things reached the peak of absurdity for me after I read a comment by a fitness guru that said "don't train your body to require more exercise to stay fit." Again, there are a lot of resources for those who want just basic fitness. We want above average, but not fanatical, fitness. How fit is fit enough? I ask myself two questions on a regular basis - 1) can I do all the physical things I want to do at the level I want to do them? and 2) do I feel better today than I did a year ago? Here are some others you might ask yourself: Can you walk, hike, run, or ski your favorite trails and focus on the scenery rather than the effort? Can you keep up with your spouse and/or children and/or grandchildren?

TRAINING: it is still cold and miserable. But there are breaks in the weather to sneak in a ride. If you "hibernate" indoors for the winter just realize that 45-60 minute "aerobic" exercise does not develop our desired level of endurance. It is great for developing your cardio-respiratory system, cycling muscle memory, and working on smooth pedaling. Don't worry, a couple weeks of long rides when the weather breaks and your endurance will build quickly. For those who have even less time focus on core strength. Even if 45-minute spin classes help the legs it generally does little to prepare your

lower back and shoulders for 4-6 hours of being bent over on the bike. So crank out back raises, crunches, and lateral bridges as often as you can.

The printed RMCC schedules are available around town and at rides. The online schedule is available at www.rmccrides.com. We have just added an e-mail and RSS alert function if you want schedule changes "pushed" to you. The orientation CD "Intro to Long Distance Cycling", the RMCC clothing, and Last Chance 1200K event registration are available at the www.midlifecycling.com Online Store.

DON'T underestimate the material in the "Intro to Long Distance Cycling" audio CD. It is cheap enough that if you even get one idea, or it saves you money on one bike shop purchase, it will have paid for itself. Even very experienced cyclists can get some benefit from it. I read that a Race Across America participant said he went through 17 pairs of Hutchinson Carbon Comp tires. Yes, that is probably to be expected from a soft-compound race training tire. If you don't know what that means then get the CD. It is still frustrating to me to see riders grinding up the hills in their big gears, running out of water, bonking from lack of nutrition, and generally not riding to what I know their potential is. So consider the CD if you haven't had any formal bike training. Have a great week.



Rick Russon

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