



“I'm behind on Training. Now What”

Complied May 14, 2009

“We've had almost two months of weekends with bad or questionable weather. As such, I'm way behind on my training goals for the year. I'm concerned about not being ready for the event I've been training for. What recommendations are there to help me get back on track and have a good ride?” This question was posed to a number of experienced RMCC riders. Here are their responses.

How Should I train now?

Tim Kalisch: I am in the same boat. Last weekend we got out for a couple of hours instead of the 200K I had planned on. I just bumped the intensity and rode hard tempo on the flats and pretty much all out on the climbs we did. I believe intensity (intervals and racing) helps immensely on the longer rides and vice versa. Intervals up the cruising speed you can maintain during long events and long events give you endurance during shorter efforts. I have also found I will be okay on a ride as long as I have been regularly doing mileage or time on previous rides that are at minimum half the distance of the event. For example, if your goal is a century and you have only been able to do 40 or 50 mile rides due to the weather but the intensity has been there you will be fine on a 100 mile ride if you back off to what I call brevet pace where you never go anaerobic.

Jim Kraychy: First ride or two back after some time off: ride at an easy pace and moderate distances. Too much too soon will at the very least take the fun out of riding again. What might at first seem like too short a ride actually seems to be much more beneficial to regaining fitness than an all-at-once approach. Patience!

Then start building your endurance back by lengthening the rides gradually. Don't slam yourself back to full on all at once on just one ride. Work on rebuilding your endurance first, don't worry about strength so much as this will still be there. Keep it fun.

John Lee Ellis: For me the key tools are Intensity, Level of Activity, and Time Pockets. The good news is there's been plenty of good weather, just not where we'd most like it. Nowadays it's light from 5:30am to 8:00pm - most of us can find time for an hour or two to ride at breakfast or at lunch or in the evening, depending on our schedules during those sunny weekdays. Fill these time pockets with higher intensity workouts - hills and climbing are the easiest way to do this - and you can really leverage the training effect. Try to maintain your desired level of activity (hours per week), even if it's not on the bike.

Charlie Henderson: The short routes of the RMCC Ride Program can work well when starting later in the year.

Start by making a commitment to ride both the Saturday and Sunday short courses. By riding them you will automatically be building volume and endurance.

Saturdays climbing ride do small portions in the first few weeks with intensity (tempo) and each week keep building up the miles you do at tempo. Stay with the short course so you can ride most of it at tempo. It will do you more good in building your VO2 max to ride a shorter route hard than to slog through a long course.

Sundays ride is for recovery and to build volume. Try to keep your heart rate in only zone 1 and 2. Ride the short course and each week try to build the miles by 10 to 15%. To get the increase in miles either add to the short course or subtract from the long course. Our maps show alternate roads and our ride leaders can assist you in finding a suitable route. Remember that this day, no matter how long you make it, is for recovery and to build volume which increases your endurance. If you do the second day ride with intensity you will depress your performance rather than increase it from week to week.

Sargent McDonald: In that situation I usually head to the gym. The main thing is to try and not over do it trying to make up time or miles, as that could lead to overtraining or injuries. The best thing to do was like John said adjust your schedule as much as possible to get as much training in as possible.

How can I still ride well in my event/tour?

Tim Kalisch: As I indicated, do the ride at a slower, steady pace below anaerobic threshold. There are some 300K rides coming up I really don't feel ready for as far as time on the bike goes since I have only recently started going over the 100 mile mark. But you just need to use energy management and coast on the downhills, draft other people and back off on the hills, keep eating and drinking and, of course, be willing to suffer!

Mark Michel: Don't forget that riding with RMCC, even if it's not as frequently as we would like, is the best training around. With most centuries, tours etc., RMCC riders will be better prepared than the rest of the people there, so be confident and have a good ride!

How can I prevent this problem from arising in the future?

Jim Kraychy: It helps to keep active somehow during periods you can't ride.

John Lee Ellis: There are plenty of things to do on non-biking-friendly days. In the winter there was snowshoeing and skiing. At this season, our great variety of mountain and foothill hiking trails are a great way to maintain circulatory and cardiovascular tone. Combine these strategies, and you should be on the mark for a good performance when your event rolls around!

Tom Groves: Road Trips – I have indulged myself with 2 week-long tours in early '09. The Death Valley Tour (Colorado Heart Cycle) and The Arizona Contrail (RMCC) both presented demanding days of riding and neither had measurable precipitation, though the Death Valley trip had very high winds. Each trip had reasonable costs being relatively close to Colorado & being offered by nonprofit organizations.

Gym – Strength training and core work. Lower body workouts often integrated with upper body workouts and / or core work. Prefer twice a week workouts, though three days is more often recommended in the off-season. See *Weight Training for Cyclists*, by Doyle & Schmitz.

OutDoors in Colorado. I wish I could still run, but I can't, though it certainly has its merits. I'm sure XC skiing is very effective as too skate skiing (in Frisco), but I don't do either.

Cyclocross or mountain bike riding – I have a cyclocross bike w/ fenders that is used when it is wet outside. It offers a different perspective and Denver has a wealth of trails and roads otherwise not accessible to road bikes.

Carol Gerber: I'm mainly a long-distance runner, so my fitness level is high all year around. Weather doesn't determine my training since I can run outside in any kind of weather (and I do!). I don't really worry too much about the fitness side of cycling if the weather is bad, but the 'seat' time can be a factor if the weather isn't great. That's the great thing about cross training!

Mark Michel: The cycling season in Colorado really is about 10 months long. During the year, we all have high and low points of conditioning. Some of those are planned for—like when we get on form before a tour; others are unplanned—injury can be a setback while an unexpectedly warm winter can have you feeling like you are in great shape on March first. Roll with the flow and take advantage of what Mother Nature offers, and find other ways to have fun when it's not so great for riding!