

# Are You Ready for Your Big Ride?

Whether you're planning on challenging yourself this season with a century, time trial, stage race, mountain climb or just a long ride with your local cycling group...its BIG RIDE season!

Hopefully by this time of year many of us have been focusing our training so we can compete or do well in the big rides or our "A" rides this year. This is when the hard work starts to pay off. We all want to build upon and fine-tune the fitness we've spent so much time developing.

Here are 5 areas to focus on as your BIG RIDE approaches:

## 1. Practice Like You Play. Stay Focused on Your Goals

At least four weeks prior to your big ride/race make sure that you're on the bike training mimics your ride/race conditions as closely as possible. Don't just go out and ride, ride with a goal, a purpose. If you're focusing on criteriums, go out and work on cornering, bridging gaps, accelerations and anaerobic intervals. For centuries, work on your miles and have at least two to three 75-plus mile rides in this four week period. For climbing, do hill repeats, and climbing terrain rides. For Individual time trials you'll want to focus on developing muscular endurance and improving aerobic threshold performance while perfecting your position on the bike.

## 2. Work on Your Weak Points.

Now is also the time to work on improving those areas we know are weak areas. Need to work on endurance? Work in some slower tempo rides to boost endurance. Can't climb well? Take one or two rides per week and make them hill climb rides. Go shorter on total mileage, but load up with lots of vertical terrain and focus on force production and relaxed climbing posture. If you tend to experience low back fatigue, it still isn't too late to add in some off the bike core work to strengthen and stabilize your lower back.

## 3. Don't Overdo it!

Please, don't make the common mistake of try to play catch up. If you're behind in your training, that's OK. Accept it and deal with it in a common sense

manner. DO NOT go out and try and punish yourself into shape! This will only leave you weak for your event and could potentially push you into and over trained mode and even set you up for injury. Instead try and focus on your weak points but allow for several recovery rides at a low level of effort and yes, days off the bike for complete recovery. REMEMBER, recovery is where your body actually converts the work stress you've imposed on it into performance improvement.

#### **4. Nourish Yourself Well and Get Plenty of Rest.**

The person in the best condition is not always the one who performs the best, but the one who is well rested and properly nourished. This is a hard concept for some to grasp. Starting about two weeks out from your event, you must begin to reduce your total work level volume while maintaining intensity...this is called tapering. This process will enable you to maintain your current level of fitness and top off your energy reserves for your upcoming event. If you haven't reached your fitness goals by this point the chances of you reaching them for this event are slim. Better to rest and recover and put in the best performance your fitness level will permit then readjust and reset your focus. This is a good time to review your plan[s] and try and understand what things can be adjusted to improve results for your next "A" event.

#### **5. Prepare Your Mind.**

During the weeks leading up to your event, use mental imagery while training to begin the process of mental preparation. Visualize yourself in your event performing well; you're relaxed and confident. Tell yourself you are strong, fast and agile. Envision yourself cresting hills with relative ease and power. Also remember to focus on your breathing. Energize your body through proper breathing technique and relaxation.

Give it Your Best! Let me know about your success with your BIG RIDE!  
Ride Hard. Be Prepared. Train Your Body and Your Mind!

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