

Off-Season Training

The onset of the winter months here in the north usually signals a cessation or modification of regular training and/or racing activities. Depending upon what level of cycling you participate in during the “in season” will have a bearing on what the “off season” means to your training calendar.

If you race during the “regular season”, the old standard of passing the winter months with little or no activity have long since past. Competitive cyclists continue training throughout the year albeit at reduced levels during the “off season” because they know their competition will be. Recreational cyclists can also benefit from maintaining an active regular schedule of training activities. Cyclists as a group don’t want to loose the fitness they worked to gain “in season”.

If you do race or are a serious recreational cyclist, come November assuming you’ve had a full season of challenging rides, races and training often your body is ready for a break. You may actually want to put the bike away for a while. Recovery, either defined as a complete cessation of activity or a markedly reduced level of exertion. This mode is actually when your body adapts to the training/racing stresses you’ve subjected your system to. Throughout the “in season”, regular rest periods or micro periods of reduced training volume are an essential component for fitness gains. In the “off season”, the same rule is true in macro periods or multiple week volume reductions as a seasonal rest period.

Early “off season” training should include core strength training and functional resistance training, which needs to be built off the bike, since cycling itself does not allow for this. Resistance training will help provide increase in strength necessary to improve your sustainable power output on the bike as well as core training, which will help provide a solid platform for your body to resist or channel that newly developed lower body power into the pedals. The mid to later portion of your “off season” block is a great opportunity to begin working on rebuilding your aerobic base. Lower volume and shorter intensity level bike work, many road cyclists transition to cyclocross or mountain biking during the fall months with cross training like ice skating, snow shoeing, winter hiking or running or indoor cycling classes being popular during the colder winter months. Indoor cycling

classes can be a great opportunity to work on pedaling, climbing and cadence technique as well as aerobic base building in a group setting with a motivating instructor.

Diet is another consideration during the “off season”. During the “in season” most competitive cyclists shift the composition of their caloric intake toward a greater percentage of quality carbohydrates with protein playing a lesser role. During the “off season”, due to reduced intensity levels, a shift back toward protein and healthy fats as a greater portion of your diet with carbohydrates playing a reduced role. The reason for this is primarily to aid in rebuilding of body tissues, more on this in a five-page paper, which I can email to you, called “Better Eating—A Life Style Change”. It goes into much more depth about diet composition and how the body deals with different types of foods. A mild caloric reduction of about 10 percent should help keep your weight in check. Don’t obsess about putting on an additional 5 pounds during this period, as these will begin to come off as you begin low intensity aerobic base building.

Recovery Makes You A Stronger Cyclist.

Remember Keep It Fun!

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