

# Reaching Those Goals This Summer

For many a club cyclist, plans for reaching our primary and secondary goals for this upcoming cycling season are already in motion. For others, only now are they beginning to give serious thought to this as the weather begins to break. Maybe it's finishing that first century ride without feeling like you've been run over by a truck. Maybe it's riding that century faster than ever before. Whatever the goal, there are specific means to work toward realizing these goals.

For those more experienced cyclists, or those with a coach, the plan was designed and implemented as early as last fall. With appropriate periods mapped out for strength improvement, aerobic base building, power transfer, and interval training, with a goal of peaking for specific events. Whether with the help of a coach or going it alone, there are some specific training approaches you can integrate as you develop your training plan.

For improving or extending your endurance capacity, or increasing the distance you can ride at during one outing, start with a mileage figure you're reasonably sure you can ride without much difficulty. Maybe it's 25 miles or maybe it's 50. Then add no more than 5 to 10 % more mileage each time you go out for a training ride. I find it helpful particularly if you want to monitor your time and/or speed to choose the same course once a week for this increase. An ever-expanding loop or closed courses like a bike only loop at a local park are good choices.

Work your mileage up to riding about three quarters of your goal distance comfortably and you should be able cover the entire distance in good order. Always take note of hydration and nutrition intervals as you strive for longer and longer distances. Note when the event date is and making sure to leave a volume reduction/recovery week available prior to the event date. Then work backward from that date to your starting mileage. One or possibly two of these sessions per week should be adequate.

To cover a given distance faster...you must ride faster. This sounds simple enough, but keep in mind that to raise your speed by one mile per hour over your current speed requires you to overcome air drag over and around your body by that given resistance cubed! The energy required to perform this feat requires one training element: Intensity. Training with intensity will cause increased force production by increasing muscle size and contraction rate, efficient muscle recruitment patterns, improved metabolic pathways for using lactate as fuel as well as clearing metabolic wastes. Since most intensity training requires recovery intervals, this training mode is referred to as interval training.

Interval training is strong medicine and as such needs to be used as such. Due to the stresses this training mode places on your system, several variables should be taken into account for maximum effectiveness. Your age, number of training years, peaking times and other factors will have a bearing on how quickly you can adapt and add speed. It can take several years to improve your flat road speed from 16-18 mph to 20-22 mph. Having said this though, a good way to begin to integrate this type of training into your plan is to add a mile an hour or two to short distances while riding your familiar loop. They can be as short as 100 yards to 1/8 mile to as long as 1/4 to 1/2 mile depending on your conditioning and the terrain. Remember to recover fully before the next bout. How will you know how much of a recovery period is enough? Your body will tell you. Again, use the 10% rule here also. Only add 10% more distance at the higher mph each outing. With consistent application from year to year though, increases will happen. Always make sure you allow enough recovery after this type of session. Remember, adaptation always occurs during rest/recovery periods not during the training session itself.

Good Luck in Achieving Your Summer Goals! Enjoy the Journey.

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