

The Coaches Training Tips

Recovery

The area of training that many of us find most difficult is recovery. The problem that this creates is that recovery is an integral part of the improvement process. Performance improvement is based on a simple formula:

$$\textit{Work hard} + \textit{Recover well} = \textit{Best performance}^1$$

Most cyclists are good at the first part – working hard. If we are not improving as much or as fast as we would like we often work harder. The result is increasing fatigue and eventually diminished performance.

The normal physiological reaction to training is fatigue followed by adaptation, or overcompensation, during the recovery period. It is during the adaptation phase of training that we improve.

The importance of recovery means that it needs to be incorporated into every training program. Athletes from many sports use the following six step recovery plan² after training or competition:

1. *Drink and eat*
 - Start restoring fluid and energy levels within five minutes with a sports drink, sandwiches or fruit.
 - Stretch lightly and move around to prevent blood pooling and remove lactic acid.
2. *Stretch and shower*
 - Continue to rehydrate and refuel during the first ten minutes and stretch in a warm shower.
 - Alternate between hot and cold showers every 30 seconds for three to five minutes.
3. *Continue recovering*
 - During the next 50-60 minutes have a meal and keep drinking fluids
 - Unwind using a relaxation technique or music.
4. *Unwind in the evening*
 - Relax by reading, watching TV or listening to music, shower or bath, self massage (especially the legs) and stretch. There is an argument that the most effective time to statically stretch is in the evening before going to bed.
5. *Prepare for sleep*
 - Just before going to bed use relaxation techniques such as visualisation exercises or breathing exercises to switch off.
6. *Morning check*
 - Check your resting heart rate [there is a move away from measuring resting heart rate to measuring heart rate after five minute of cycling on a stationary trainer] and weight to monitor hydration
 - Record how you feel and plan your training day accordingly.

For roadies some of the above techniques, such as hot and cold showers, may not be practical. However, we can follow much of the plan or adapt it for our own purposes. For example, I have found that using pressure garments such as 'Skinz' immediately after a hard race and then hot and cold showers at home works well for me.

The other part of recovery is active recovery, usually the day following intense training or competition. The important thing to note is that this is *active* recovery not complete rest or inactivity. It is possible to do basic speed and technique training in the morning and recover with aerobic endurance training in the evening³. However, an athlete following this plan would still need to have appropriate active recovery days as part of their plan. Active recovery usually comprises easy pedalling at 50-60% maximum heart rate.

Failure to incorporate appropriate recovery into your training plan ultimately leads to overtraining. Symptoms of overtraining include:

- Consistent decrease in training/race performance
- Increase in resting, or five minute, of more than ten percent. An increase of 20 percent indicates a serious problem and all training should cease until heart rate returns to normal
- Inability to reach normal heart rate during training
- Apathy
- Fatigue
- Sleep disturbances
- Significant weight loss
- Frequent injuries
- Increased susceptibility to colds/flu
- Menstrual dysfunction (females)
- Loss of coordination/decreased motor skills

Of course, these symptoms can also signify a medical problem so if they persist or you are concerned go and see your doctor.

¹ A. Calder, 'Recovery and Regeneration', http://www.ask.net.au/downloads/Faster_Higher_Stronger_Coaching_UK.pdf, 2003

² F.S. Pyke, 'Principles of training' in *Better Coaching: Advanced Coaches Manual*, 2nd edn., ed. F.S. Pyke, Human Kinetics, Lower Mitcham, 2001. pp. 101-109.

³ A. Simpkin, 'Principles of Conditioning' in *Training*, ed. A. Simpkin, Coachwise, Armley, 2000, pp. 23-30.

Finally, it is a good idea to keep a training diary to record your heart rate, how well you performed your training, weather and course conditions and how you felt on the day. How you feel is often the best indication of how you are coping with training and if you are getting sufficient recovery⁴. Figure 1 is a simple way to record how you feel.

| <i>Tick how you feel</i> | ☺ | ☹ | ⊗ |
|--------------------------|---|---|---|
| Physically | | | |
| Psychologically | | | |
| Emotionally | | | |

Figure 1⁵

Team Time Trial Training

I am writing a generic training plan for club members wanting to prepare for the team time trial. The plan should be available within the next two weeks. If you would like a copy just send me an email. Alternatively, there will be copies available at Lakeside.

If anyone has any suggestions for this column or wants to discuss their training just send me an email or give me a call on 0402 446 947.

Don't forget to check the Wednesday email notice for information on Sunday morning training rides.

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⁴ A. Calder, *Recovery in Training and Competition*, Australian Institute of Sport, Belconnen, 1996.

⁵ *ibid.*