

## **The Coaches Training Tips**

### ***Team Time Trial Training***

With the State Time Trials for Teams coming up in July it is a good time to start thinking about preparing for this event. In this event the focus is definitely on team. This desire to not let your team mates down can provide the stimulus to perform at your best. However, unless all riders work together as a team you will not achieve the rewards for your efforts.

In order for four riders to cross the finish line together in the shortest possible time there are five areas that we need to focus on:

1. Physical training
2. Technique
3. Psychological preparation
4. Pre and post race preparation
5. Equipment

In this issue I intend to concentrate on technique. Many team time trials have been lost by strong riders who haven't worked as a team and followed the basic techniques to be successful.

### ***Be Smooth***

The number 1 rule for team time trials is be smooth. DO NOT SURGE under any circumstances when taking the lead. When the front rider has finished their turn, the rider behind checks the speed on their computer and maintains that speed. The rider who has finished their pull moves to the windward side and decreases their speed slightly, allowing the other riders to pass. At least one member of the team will be riding near their anaerobic threshold, so if the lead rider accelerates they will be pushed so hard they may not finish. If no one is near their maximum, the team is not riding fast enough.

### ***Stronger Riders pull Longer***

Some riders on your team will be stronger than others. To balance this out stronger riders should not pull harder – go faster – they should pull longer. Conversely a weaker rider should take shorter turns or at time just roll through without taking a turn. The weaker rider should not exceed their anaerobic threshold.

It is important to know your limits and to understand the strengths of the other riders. If you are climbing stronger than the other riders you need to do longer pulls on the flat. Conversely, if you are feeling weak on the flats you need to miss a turn or two to recover.

### ***Order is Important***

Riding order can mean the difference between willing and losing. If we look at four riders we could order them from strongest to weakest as follows:

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4

The problem that we will encounter is that the weakest rider (4) will have to reattach after they have had their pull while the strongest rider (1) is in the lead. If rider 1 accelerated then rider 4 will get hammered.

A solution that some teams adopt is to order the riders:

- 1
- 4
- 2
- 3

While this overcomes the problem identified above it creates an additional problem. Less energy is expended following two riders than one. In this example, rider 4 follows the strongest, who does the longest turn, and only gets the benefit of following one rider. As a result they get less rest.

A rider order that overcomes these problems is:

- 1
- 2
- 4
- 3

If you have riders who are significantly different in size you may have to vary the order to allow for this.

The other area where rider order is important is at the start. I tend to start hard and then back off to race pace. This can create problems for other riders on the team if they are weaker. A starting order that can overcome this problem is:

3  
1  
2  
4

This allows rider three to get the team to race pace when the strongest rider takes over.

### ***Stay Close***

The closer you are to the rider in front the less work you have to do. It is important to keep it tight. Even if you are the strongest rider on the team to need to recover between pulls so you can spend longer on the front.

Conversely, when you are overtaking a rider who has finished their turn, don't pass so close that you push them off the road

Don't forget that if you are at the front to point out holes and obstacles.

### ***Turn Fast, but Safe***

There are basically two methods used in a team time trial at the turnaround. The first is basically that same as an individual time trial. The lead rider approached the mark and executes a turn, the other rider follow maintaining the same order.

With the second method, the riders continue past the mark until the last rider calls turn and everyone turns together. This is considered a faster and probably safer method. However, it does require considerable practice to be effective and it changes the rider order to:

1  
3  
4  
2

Which ever method you use it is better for everyone to turn safely. If someone falls during a turn you will lose a lot more

### ***Plan***

It is important to have a plan before you start the event. You need to know:

- Rider order
- Starting order
- Target time
- Split times – are you aiming for 50/50 splits or perhaps 49/51
- Speed required to achieve planned splits
- What you will do if you have a flat or a mechanical
- If a team member is struggling do you drop them and hope you don't have mechanical problems or do you slow down

A final word about physical training. A team time trial is not one continuous effort. It resembles series of intervals with a short recovery period in between. Interval training is an important part of any training program and an essential part of your preparation for a team time trial<sup>§</sup>.

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.

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<sup>§</sup> This article draws on the work of:

A. Baker, 1997, *Smart Cycling: Successful Training and Racing for all Levels of Riders*, Fireside, New York.  
A Baker, 2004, *Strategy & Tactics for Cyclists*, Argo, San Diego.  
T Prehn, 2004, *Racing Tactics for Cyclists*, Velo Press, Boulder.