

## Training Log 05: Basic Training Template

In response to the timeline of objectives that I discussed in my last posting, the main request I've been receiving from newer cyclists is an idea of a weekly training plan to help them towards hitting those goals. I will say up front that it's extremely difficult to provide a generic template, because everybody is individual in their background. For example, how much you do each week and month depends on your background in cycling, background in sports in general, current fitness, weight, etc. Indeed, my entire coaching philosophy is individualized training rather than a mass standard training program.

So that's my bias out of the way, because I will still try to provide a generic template. First up are some time-tested training tips:

- To become a better cyclist, nothing but nothing trumps time on the bike. Cross-training is always good and useful for variety. But we're now 4.5 months away from the ride, and the primary emphasis should be time on the bike. However, there is absolutely nothing wrong with spending time doing other fitness activities that you enjoy, just do not go overboard with those. Stretching and core strength workouts are also really excellent complements, because cycling is so specific to one posture.
- In general, aim for a cadence of about 90 pedal revolutions per minute as an average while riding. Except for lowering your cadence on hills, you should not be riding in high gears at low cadences. Doing so puts a lot more stress on your muscles and knees. Think of it this way. If you're lifting 10,000 kg, you can lift 1,000 kg 10 times or 100 kg 100 times. The first option is going to be MUCH more tiring than the second option. The second option will shift more of the stress to your heart and lungs than the leg muscles themselves, allowing you to not get as tired.
- For newer cyclists, spend 30-60 min a week on learning bike skills. This allows you to ride safely and confidently in a pack of riders. Get a group together on a grass field or empty parking lot and have some fun. One excellent article of skills and drills is from our PezCycling News website: <http://www.pezcyclingsnews.com/?pg=fullstory&id=5614>.
- Build you your endurance gradually. You should avoid increasing the number of hours you're training by more than 10% each week. If you've been training really hard, that might drop down to 5% a week. Doing too much too quickly can get you too tired, a concept called overtraining. It can also damage muscles and connective tissue not used to the suddenly heavier load.
- Adequate recovery is at least as essential as proper training. Remember that training is just the stress you impose on your body. If you don't let yourself recover from that stress, eventually your body will break down.
- Don't worry so much about distance. I concentrate on hours of training. With the wind in Nova Scotia, riding 50 km into the teeth of a headwind is very different training from 50 km with a tailwind!

With those basics in mind, here is some specific advice on how to plan out a training schedule:

- I would structure a month of training. In each four week block, I would gradually increase my training about 10% a week for the first three weeks. Then the fourth week

would be a recovery week, where the total training time might be only half that of the previous week. For example, the hourly breakdown might be 7-8-9-5 h over the four week block.

- Over the course of a week, I would avoid scheduling more than three hard workouts over a week even for a really fit racing cyclist. It becomes extremely hard to recover adequately from more training stress than that.
- For newer cyclists, do not worry about fancy and specialized intervals, sprint training, and other stuff like that. The primary thing is saddle time and building endurance. Everything depends on that. Starting intervals and such without a big base in endurance is a recipe for overtraining, tendonitis, and other things that are going to seriously impede your training and enjoyment.
- Having said that, I put Griffin through an intense training program last year of a variety of intervals and really hard training. I could get away with that because of his strong aerobic background from his hurling training.
- For the bulk of your rides, concentrate on keeping a cadence of about 90 rpm, a steady pace, and your heart rate at a comfortable but not intense level. How intense? On a scale ranging from 0 being “lying on the couch” to 10 being “unbearably hard”, the majority of your rides should be at a feeling of 5-6.

The way to vary training stress over the course of a week is by the duration of your rides. As an example, for a 10 h training week, you might break up the week as follows:

- Monday: rest. Stretching, core strength exercises.
- Tuesday: 2 h ride
- Wednesday: 1 h ride
- Thursday: 1.5 h ride
- Friday: Rest. Stretching, core strength exercises.
- Saturday: 2.5 h ride
- Sunday: 3 h ride

I know I’ve been dancing around the issue, but it remains my very firm belief that there is no single template that can work for even a simple majority of people. Feel free to contact me for specific advice or guidance with ideas at [stephen.cheung@brocku.ca](mailto:stephen.cheung@brocku.ca).

Ride strong and have fun!  
Stephen