

Training Log 06: It's All About the Bike!

Last month, I wrote about a generic template for training over the course of a week and a month, and I hope that you've been able to use that and adapt as necessary for your individual schedule and life. One thing that I wrote in that piece was that bike time becomes critical, especially for newer riders. It takes a tremendously long time to build up sport-specific endurance, especially to be able to ride day after day for hours at a time. It is definitely not something that comes overnight. It may seem easy to knock off one long ride, but the real trick is to be able to wake up the next day and do it again. Look at it this way – building fitness and endurance is like a pyramid. The foundation has to be as wide as possible if you want your peak (fitness) to be as high as possible. At this point, four months out from the ride and through this summer, laying down as much foundation endurance training as possible is the priority.

So if we want to “walk like an Egyptian,” what are some ways in which we can build up endurance and bike time throughout the course of a week? Again, I know every person and every schedule is different, but I would be aiming for about 10 h a week of riding throughout June and July in order to lay this groundwork. To think this through, let's look at how I've logged 13-14 h of riding each of the past couple of weeks. Again, this is not the only way, but hopefully it gives you some ideas to consider:

Monday: Easy commute ride to work and back (1:20 total). There is NO easier way to add hours on the bike than commuting to work. I first learned this lesson during my university days. It would take me 60 min each way to drive the 30 km to UBC in Vancouver. Instead, it would take me 67 min to ride straight into my lab. So for a grand total of 15 extra minutes total (plus another 15 min to shower and change), I gained 2:15h of bike time every day without even having to think about it! My commute now is 17.5 km through the beautiful wine roads of Niagara, taking about 40 min each way for a total of 1:20h free biking each day. That's nearly 7 h of riding over 5 days!

Tuesday: Commute plus club training race in evening (2:30 total). Apart from my Sunday group rides, these are my main high-intensity group sessions of the week. If you're recovered from the weekend, this is a good day to do some longer (3-5 min) threshold intervals. The point of these intervals is not to sprint all out, but to go at a harder than “normal” pace and keep it steady throughout the interval. The purpose is to slowly add intensity and raise your lactate threshold, or your average speed. You should be breathing pretty heavily throughout, but again it shouldn't be an all-out sprint. Recover easy (but not too easy, keep it maybe just a little below your “normal” speed) for the same period of time. Depending on fitness, aim for 6-8 of these intervals.

Wednesday. Commute (1:20). For my racing, I'll throw in some efforts similar to what I prescribed for Tuesday, usually doing them on the gradual hills or into the wind heading home.

Thursday. Commute (1:20).

Friday. Endurance plus (2-3h). Being a professor and not working for a living, I have the luxury of scheduling my work and adapting it to my own needs within reason. So with homeschooling our two boys (Zachary and Jacob will soon be 8 and 6), my wife Debbie and I have taken the

boys on the local touring club rides that meet Friday morning for 2 h or so. It's a steady effort and also a good way to build strength by pulling Jacob on the trailer bike! I usually supplement this with riding around town doing errands like shopping on Fridays.

Saturdays. Intervals (1h). Saturdays are the crazy-busy family days, with the boys having gymnastics and soccer. Plus Debbie works alternate Saturdays so I'm on full-time boy patrol. I'll usually wake up early like I always do and do a quick 1 h of hill intervals around the neighbourhood (similar to Tuesday's suggestion) before the family gets going.

Sunday. Group ride (3h). Our St. Catharines Cycling Club has a traditional Sunday hammer-fest when there's no racing going on. This is a perfect race simulation, with hard steady efforts, then people build up to trying to basically kill each other in a hard 30 km section, then a final steady endurance effort (or crawl) home. For the GTL ride, a long group ride at least one day of the weekend is critical to build up the endurance. There's no need for hammering like I do for bike racing – the point is to learn to ride in a pack, build endurance, and share in the camaraderie of cycling!

There are lots of simple ways you can adapt your schedule and lifestyle to add a bit of training time while still being a productive member of society. Remember that it's endurance that's critical right now. Good luck!

Ride strong and have fun!
Stephen