



TRAINING TIPS by Brett Aitken – Olympic Gold Medallist

The challenges of riding over 100km are destined to test some riders to their physical and mental limitations if you aren't ready for it. It will therefore help if you go into the ride expecting tough conditions but prepared and confident to overcome these challenges that will consist of a combination of distance, hilly terrain, wind and heat.

By following some of these guidelines and tips we hope your ride will be both successful, enjoyable and a very memorable one.

Unlike the Professional cyclist, many of us don't have 8 hours a day to train for a long-distance cycling event. This makes it more important to get in a training programme that consists of a structure of both higher intensity and long endurance sessions.

For most people a normal working week is from Monday to Friday and the available hours for training are normally restricted. It is therefore a good idea to do the higher intensity sessions on two of these days that are spaced apart from the others to promote recovery. For example, Tuesday and Thursday might be good days to do hard training sessions while Monday, Wednesday and Friday may be a short light recovery ride of 30 minutes to one hour.

What type of hard training should I do?

The best type of hard training to get fast improvements should consist of some short interval training efforts that can be done out on the road or on an indoor trainer. These may include up to 4 or 5 intervals that last about 5 minutes. On a Perceived Exertion Level (PER) of 1 to 10 with 1 being very easy and 10 being extremely hard the PER level should be around 8 or 9. Have a short 5-to-10-minute recovery between each interval and then go again. With a 15-to-20-minute warm-up the whole session should only take 60 to 90 minutes, but it will be the equivalent of going out and doing a 3-to-4-hour steady road ride.

What about endurance rides?

If you've got a bit more time on the weekends, then this is a good time to do some steady long rides. Aim to do a gradual progression and build up in training in the weeks leading up to it. Each week add about 10km in distance to your previous week's long ride. By about two weeks out from the big ride you should be able to complete about two 80km rides in a row or a single 100km ride on the weekend. Try and include some tough climbs in your training rides as well.

Simulate Ride Day

If this is your first big ride it may be worth going through a ride simulation day where you do everything you expect to do on the day. This includes things such as preparing food, equipment, clothing, drinks and doing the ride. Conditions will always be different on the day, but experience and preparation can make your ride more successful if you have learned from previous mistakes.



Nutrition

During training your nutritional habits play a huge part in how energized you feel daily. High intensity efforts deplete your carbohydrate stores and break down muscle while the long endurance rides will help you burn off some unwanted fat. Knowing this you should plan your meals with the next day's training in mind.

If you have a harder day coming up, then in the previous 24 hours try keeping your carbohydrate sources of food at a higher level (60-70% of daily calories).

If you have a recovery day coming up and have just completed a hard day where you might need some muscle repair, then raise your protein intake to about 50% of that day's total calorie intake. Carbohydrate sources include pasta, cereals, bread, rice etc. and protein sources include meat, fish, eggs, milk etc.

Carbohydrate loading before the event

In the week leading up to the event it is important that you keep your training light and easy. A light easy roll is better than no training at all. The movement will promote blood flow to the muscles for recovery while keeping them supple and feeling better each day. If you combine this with an increase in carbohydrate meals to 75% of daily calories for the last 4 days before the event, then you will be fully energized going into the day of the ride. The effect of carbo loading has a dual benefit as well by pre-hydrating your body with precious water and therefore reducing possible dehydration on the day. It does this because the body stores 2.7 grams of water for every 1 gram of carbohydrate (glycogen) stored. Don't be alarmed if your weight goes up during this carb-loading period, as it is purely water retention.

Eating and Drinking on the day

Don't do anything drastically different to what you would normally do when it comes to your pre-event meal but try and finish a couple of hours before the start. The last thing you want is an upset stomach because you tried something different to what you'd normally do. If you've loaded up well your body should be stored with plenty of energy for the ride, but you will need to keep topping it up throughout the ride with foods that are high in glucose and sugars. Fruit bars, cakes, muesli bars, bananas, jam sandwiches and even a bit of chocolate are all good sources of energy during a ride.

Hydration will be crucial and the best way to tackle this is by drinking glucose polymer sports drinks throughout the ride. They also act as another source of energy. If it's a really hot day start drinking 150 to 250ml every 15 minutes starting a couple of hours out from the start of the event and continue this on throughout the ride.



Pace Yourself and Stick to the Plan

In the excitement of the occasion, it is very easy to go out much faster than you planned. Adrenaline and the competitor in you can sometimes take over wanting to keep up with the pack in front. Without a doubt you will probably surprise yourself in your capabilities but initially you should stick to your plan.

Fatigue and dehydration can come on very quickly when everything seemed completely fine only moments before so go steady early on then come home strong at the end if you feel good. That way you will finish on a real high and enjoy the ride a whole lot more.

Have fun and good luck!