Training for Biking – Training Considerations, Clothing etc.

Training Considerations for Junior and Novice Cyclists

- Young and inexperienced cyclists cannot sustain long training sessions. Plan to include breaks or a "drop off" in training midway through the season to enable the cyclist to recover
- Juniors and Novices cannot sustain long periods of speed work in their build-up
- Interval training and heavy gym work should be avoided until riders are physically able to cope (usually late teens)
- Leg speed and technique are the essential keys to good performances. Strength and power can be added once leg speed is gained
- Juniors and Novices are unable to tolerate high volumes of training as well as more experienced cyclists with a broader training history
- Juniors and novices take longer to recover from racing and training (as a rule) than older, more experienced cyclists
- The aim for all cyclists is to have fun and enjoy cycling. To continue in the sport for many years it is important to enjoy cycling. Winning is not everything.
- Everybody matures at different ages – therefore give the body time to mature. Beware of comparing one cyclist to another. Each of us is different, we are all individuals and we all have varying needs.
- Very good awareness of the characteristics of different stages of physical, social, emotional and cognitive development, along with the needs of the athlete at those different stages needs to be considered.

Common Training Errors

1. Riding too many Kilometres at One Speed:
Leg speed is lost and tolerance to variations in pace that occur in races, is not developed

2. Not Developing Power:
Usually generated from under gearing on hills or lack of base strength. Include some power work on hills or on the flat– aim for a cadence of about 70 rpm to increase power. Be aware that the rider does not labour on the gear but creates enough stress on the body to increase power. Spin legs on descents to recover.

3. Lack of Sprint Training:
Developing a sprint will not only make the rider competitive at the end of races but will develop the ability to "jump away" from the bunch. It enables the body to recover more quickly from short, hard efforts during races.

4. Not Drinking Enough Liquid:
Rule of thumb is one bottle (bidon) per hour during exercise, being sipped every 15-20 minutes. Water is preferable for short distances, however a carbohydrate drink or electrolyte replacement drink is recommended for longer distances. Commercial sports drinks are ideal, as long as they are low in simple sugars. Hydration and energy replenishment before and after training and racing is also very important and often under estimated.

5. Not Eating in Races or Training
To ensure optimal performance it is necessary to consume a source of carbohydrate in a ride over two hours. This can be done by taking on liquid foods about every 30 minutes such as a carbohydrate drink or eating bananas, energy bars, etc.

6. Lack of Technical Skill
For mountainbikers and BMXers especially, sufficient training time needs to be allocated for technical skills training, including starting gate procedure. Road training is ideal for fitness maintenance and some specific drills, but technical skills training can only be performed on the wide variety of terrain likely to be encountered during race conditions. Confidence levels need to be maintained through sufficient technical skills training.

7. Lack of Recovery Time
For juniors especially, it can be difficult to form an appreciation for the need to factor in sufficient recovery time after strenuous sessions, and indeed in general. Recovery should be considered as important as specific on bike training – a lack of recovery time can manifest itself in numerous ways, more often than not indicated through some form of apathy.

8. Sticking to a Plan
Adhering to training plans can be an issue when specific objectives and goals are being sought. Fostering a disciplined training approach together with athlete buy-in and understanding may avoid any surprises.

What Should You Wear While Cycling?

Cycling Shorts
Not everyone wants to wear lycra shorts but they do have their place in cycling. Cycling shorts are practical and functional as they have a chamois (padded section) in the crotch which prevents saddle sores, chaffing and allows you to ride comfortably for long periods of time. Cycling shorts should be tight fitting to ensure comfort and not loose around the crotch as the chamois may rub.

Do not wear your underwear under your cycling shorts as this will course irritation and can harbor bacteria. It is important for hygiene reasons that you wear a clean pair of cycling shorts each time.

Lightweight, lined baggy style shorts may be preferable for mountainbiking. Separate under-shorts fitted with a padded section are available, and these make wearing a wide variety of traditional styled shorts possible and comfortable.

Full length, tear resistant riding trousers with tight ankle cuffs are recommended for BMX riders. If shorts are used, adequate shin and knee protection should also be worn.

Jersey/Cycling Shirts
Cycling jerseys are designed for convenience and protection. Most jerseys will have a pocket in the back which will allow you to carry food, spare tube, money etc. The protection factor relates to the design of the jersey which is long at the back and prevents the lower back getting chilled when you are in the normal riding position.

For road and track, and some forms of mountainbiking the jersey or cycling shirt should be fitted as this reduces wind drag and stops your top flapping around. For road riding either choose a riding jersey that is bright in colour so you are visible to motorists and pedestrians, or fit some form of bright, high visibility device to achieve the same.

Looser fitting cycling shirts are popular with general mountainbiking, where wind resistance is not as much of an issue as increased cooling may be. Similar loose style riding shirts are ideal for BMX, however sleeves long enough to provide wrist coverage are required.

Cycling Shoes
When you first start cycling you may start out without cycling specific shoes or may have toe straps - this is fine for a beginner but once comfortable and to improve efficiency it is recommended that you purchase cycling specific shoes. They help transmit power from your legs to the pedals which is a more efficient use of your energy, allowing you to ride more effectively for longer periods of time.

It is recommended when buying cycling shoes you look for shoes that will be comfortable as you will be spending many hours in them. Pay particular attention to individual requirements in the areas of arch support and foot width. You also need to be aware of the compatibility of the shoes with your pedal system. Your local bike shop staff should be able to help you select the appropriate shoes for you and your bike.

Some mountainbikers and BMXers prefer to use flat type pedals to suit their own riding styles. Shoes for use with flat type pedals should be durable, have a good tread pattern and have a reasonably soft compound of tread material to maximise pedal grip.

Cycling Gloves
Cycling gloves are specifically designed to provide protection in case of a fall and help absorb some of the jarring that is transferred through the handle bars. Cycling gloves will have full or half fingers and have different levels of padded sections on the palms. Full finger gloves are required for BMX racing.

Helmet
Wearing your helmet while cycling is a legal requirement in New Zealand and very important for protecting your head. There are many brands and models of helmets which will vary in price. It is important that you purchase a helmet that has a New Zealand Safety Approved sticker or similar proof of safety compliance in the inside.

In some road, team and track events you may be able to use aero helmets - these helmets are shaped to give maximum aerodynamic advantage. Check when entering an event whether you can use an aero helmet.

Fullface helmets are strongly recommended for downhill mountainbike and BMX riding, and are compulsory for National level downhill races. If an open face helmet is worn for BMX, it must have chin protection included.

Eye Protection
UV protection for the eyes is recommended for all forms of cycling, and protective eyewear or goggles designed to stop foreign objects striking the eye are also highly recommended.

Tights/Leg Warmers
It is important to keep the leg muscles warm while warming up and when out cycling in the cold. Leg warmers are worn over your cycling shorts and are normally lycra or woolen. In some road and track races you will not be able to wear leg warmers while you compete so check the rules of the event before entering.

Protective Gear
Ankle, shin, knee and elbow pads are useful items for some forms of mountainbiking and BMX, in either soft or hard shell design. Chest, shoulder and spine protection is afforded through the use of specific body armour suits and these are more aligned with downhill forms of the sport.

Training Jacket
Used for cold days or mornings and the training jacket should have a high neck, have a wind cheater front (either nylon or thermal type material) have breathable panels down the sides or

be made of a synthetic material that breathes. Wind chill can be under-estimated in all forms of cycling, and carrying a jacket of this type is recommended at most times of the year.

General
You should wash all cycle clothing after each ride to lessen bacteria accumulation. Make sure your drink bottle is kept clean and avoid sharing it with others.

Sun block may be a necessity on high UV days – when applying allow yourself enough time for good absorption before hitting the road or trail.