Coaching myself: preparation for a 100 mile MTB race

By Rob Lockey, CSCS, USA Cycling LII coach

A perspective that I believe is often overlooked in coaching, is that of the coach and his or her training. I read many articles about how athletes have achieved this or that through coaching, which is good to see. I would like to give an account of how I coached myself to compete in my first 100 mile mountain bike race, the Breckenridge 100, which took place on July 18th. This article will be an example of practice what you preach and lead by example.

As the owner of an endurance coaching and physiological testing business, Optimize Endurance Services, I find great enjoyment in helping athletes achieve. Over the last two years I have found myself forgoing my workouts to complete business needs, so the saying goes, ''A roofer's roof always leaks''. Finding the time to train is one of the biggest hurdles for adherence to a training regimen. Well, for me to compete in a 100 mile mountain bike race I would need to locate better stability within my personal and professional life, just like my clients. Planning the available hours to train within all of the other tasks for the day helps to set reasonable goals. Scheduling the workouts into each day was a critical move that allows for a larger completion of workouts over the plan. Long term planning is the key here, a plan that includes a base, build and taper phase with the 'A' race as the focus at the end of the plan. Finding this balance would allow me the needed training hours to be prepared for the race. I chose to use a 31week training plan that I designed for racing a 100 mile MTB race. This plan has workouts for specific road biking, MTB as well as strength training, totaling 405 hours. Within the plan I had added several races to which I could practice my racing strategy for the long distance. Now I had my race and a plan built to complete my goal of under 11 hours. Time to start training.

January through July training consisted of a mixture of road and MTB rides and the use of a PowerTap power meter (rear hub design) on each bike. Time on each bike worked out as follows: Road 160 hours and 2600 miles and MTB 110 hours and 1200 miles. I also had between 40-50 hours of Pilates and strength training. To put some perspective to this in averages, I trained just 17 miles and 1 ¼ hours per day. Too bad it couldn't be this simple - this sort of regimen would most certainly put you in a rut. As it was, I only completed 89% of the plan I chose to follow. Of that 89% there was at least 15% of the time modifying the designed workouts of the plan due to factors like riding with others and or weather interruptions. I state to my clients that if they can comply with at least 80% of the training then they will see great success. I also had two lactate threshold bike tests, March and June, for dialing in my heart rate and power zones. Capturing data, whether it is heart rate, miles, duration or watts, is an important part of measuring how you are adapting to the workloads a properly designed plan can give. These loads are important to monitor for health and recovery. Too much of a good thing can become the means to an end of achieving the intended goal.

The Performance Manager Chart presented in this article comes from the power analysis software WKO+. It shows the last month of my training for the B-100, which includes the taper. The Blue line is the Chronic Training Load (CTL) or the effect of my long term training. The Pink line is the Acute Training Load (ATL) or the effort put forth during that day's workout by me. The Yellow line is the Training Stress Balance (TSB) or the effect of the workout on my ability to recover from it. The CTL stays fairly level over the month, just a slight rise, which means my fitness increased in this time. Another important aspect of the CTL to notice is that any time the ATL is declining so is the CTL. This loss of fitness is important because it allows for the rise of the TSB or freshness felt from recovery. The ATL high points are bigger efforts relative to where the TSB line is for that day. It can be seen that my recovery (TSB) is high for the Fire Cracker 50 on the 4th of July. This was to be my final practice race and every strategy that I planned to use in the B-100

was to be tested this day. Fueling, hydration and pacing, specifically, this would allow for compensation on any issues that came up so they could then be dialed in for the B-100 two weeks later. This aspect is crucial in the formula for success. Practice, practice, practice all through the training period, so that the race day isn't that much different and stress can be reduced.

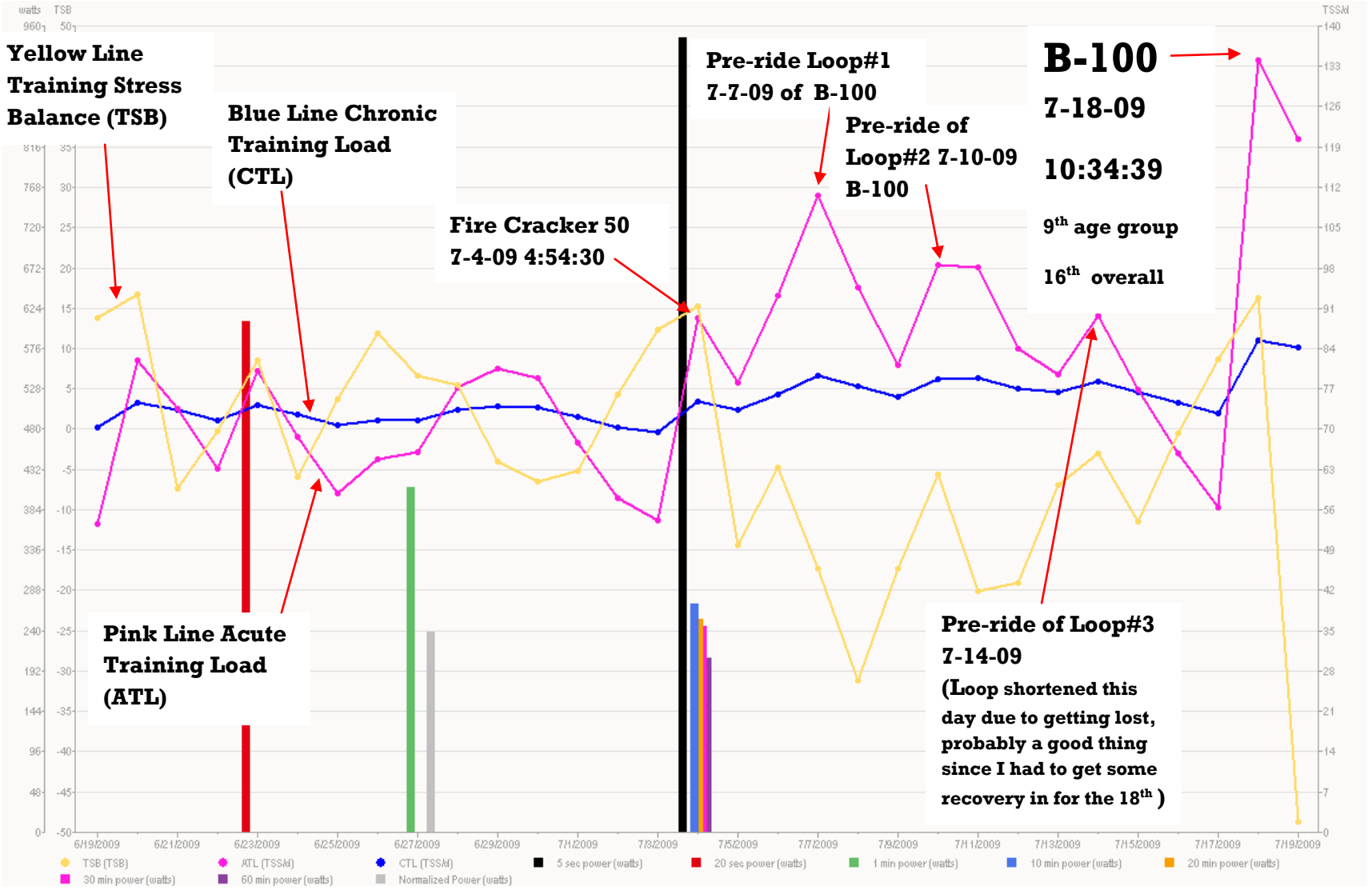
The other high points of the ATL are the pre-rides of the B-100 course. A clover leaf design is used for this race, meaning that each loop is different, but you have a common place to come back to for aid. The course had at least 80% single track and consisted of up to 14,000 feet of climbing. Riding the course beforehand gave me the ability to picture the course and practice how to race the course with regard to when to apply an effort or save myself. I pre-rode each loop at the approximate time I thought I would be on the loop during the race; this way I would have an idea on temperature and sun exposure.

B-100 race day data was manually entered due to the fact that I chose to use lighter wheels to race on, a strategy to save as much energy as possible for the long effort. Unfortunately I would not have use of the power meter, but through practice I knew my pacing and could do without it. I had an average heart rate for the race at 160bpm. This for me is at the mid-point of my zone 3 (view the included lactate threshold graph). With this type of effort, I'm using a greater combination of fat and glycogen to perform the task at hand. This means I didn't need considerably large amounts of fuel and could avoid gastrointestinal distress. More time in zones 4 and 5 would require greater fuel consumption for the duration. I consumed approx. 260oz of fluids with 60oz of that being Accelerade totaling 600 calories. I ate 1400 calories consisting of Clif Shot Bloks, Accel Gel and one Lara bar (consumed at last aid, just needed something different). I had spent many months just using these types of fuel, so I was familiar with them for racing. Point being this is an aspect of training in that you can affect how your digestive system accepts fuel. I used electrolyte pills to stay on top of the loss of minerals, consuming 13. Looking back after the race I actually didn't consume as much as I had intended on all the above mentioned items. There came a point that I just was tired of eating and drinking, so I had to force it down knowing it was going to be what allows me to continue on. After proper training, proper fueling is the number one limiter to performance.

So, what do I do after I finish 9th in my age group of 30-39 and 16th overall in a time of 10:34:39? It is time to transition to some recovery type rides and time off the bike for a couple of weeks. This will ensure that I don't overtrain and I can continue to improve for the next race or season. As much as I want to see a continual rise in my CTL, the body needs some reprieve to actually improve. This is why as a coach I build recovery time into client training and that there are seasons in cycling. The trick is to work just enough from year to year so that the movement to improvement can happen. Having a training plan to follow is the structure with which you can ensure that there is success in reaching a goal. So, whether you coach yourself or seek out a coach to help you achieve, make sure you do some long term planning and make the workouts part of your balance in life.

Rob Lockey, CSCS, ACSM/HFS and a USA Cycling LII Certified Coach, provides testing and coaching through Optimize Endurance Services. Contact him at 303-356-9893 or rob@optimizeendurance.com

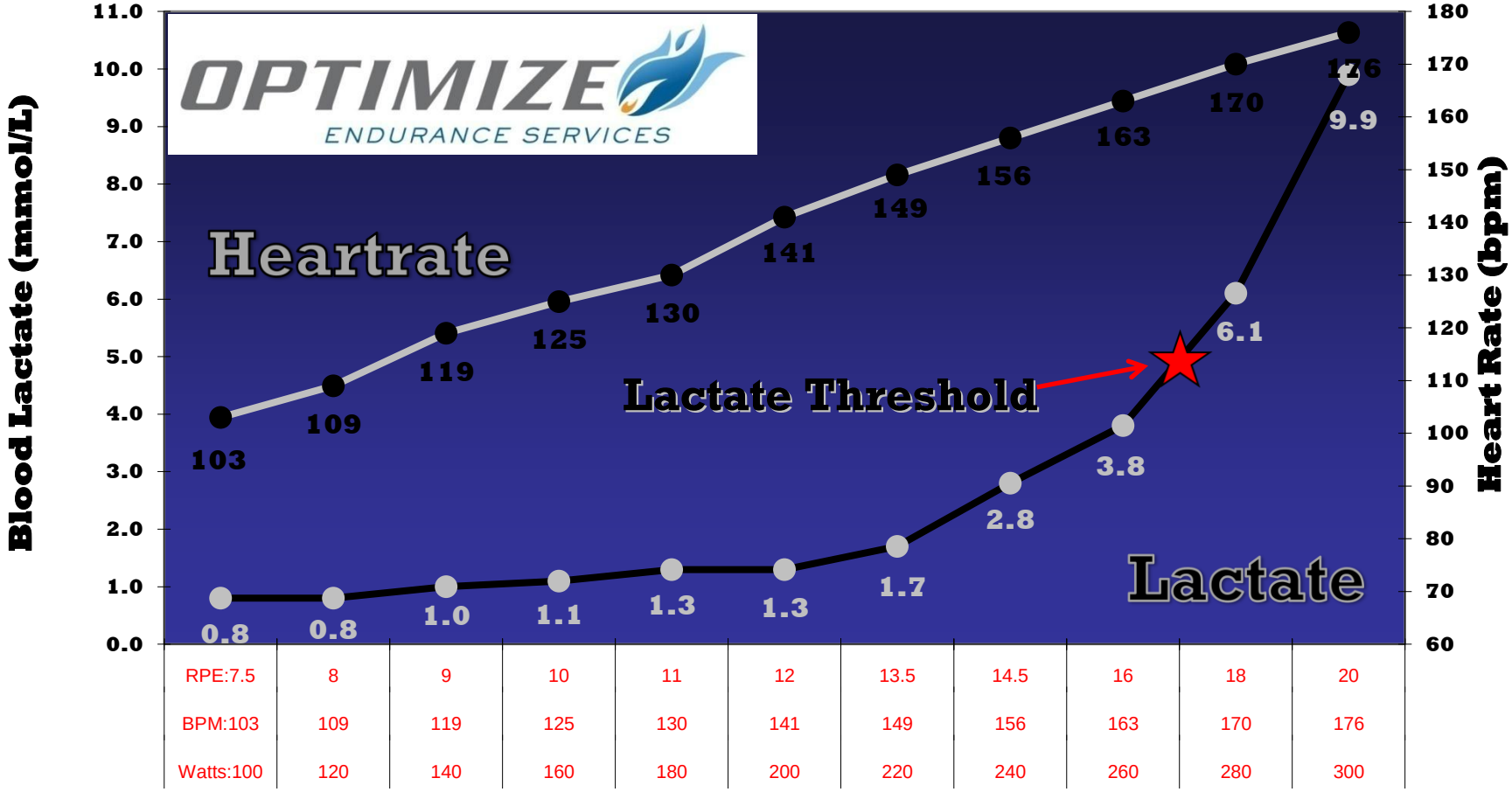
Performance Manage Chart for the month leading up to the B-100



Lactate Threshold Test: Bike

Athlete: Rob Lockey

Date: 6-4-09



RPE:7.5	8	9	10	11	12	13.5	14.5	16	18	20
BPM:103	109	119	125	130	141	149	156	163	170	176
Watts:100	120	140	160	180	200	220	240	260	280	300