

## Earn Those Saddle Sores: Longer Duration Cycling

By Rob Lockey, CSCS

Cyclists are headlong into the spring season with longer daylight hours and more favorable temperatures for outdoor riding, along with fierce headwinds. This combination stokes a strong desire to release our bikes from the constraints of the indoor trainer and let it run free to seek out longer and longer durations. This newly liberated steed can do wonders for our fitness and our outlook on the impending season of events.

Completing several one hour rides on the trainer each week ultimately won't provide you the specificity of duration needed to complete an event requiring many hours in the saddle. Now is the time to embrace increased duration on the bike. Make time on the weekend rides to increase your saddle time by 10-20% each weekend as you progress through the spring months of training. Still do your weekday rides as you have been doing, just move them outside if you have the ability to do so. Not only will the increase in duration assist in increased ability, the change of workload (i.e. outside) will complement the improvement.

When starting these increases in duration it is best to plan out and back routes so that you can easily turn around if you're not feeling up to the task of the plan for the day. You can also use the out and back route as a benchmark of improvement. You make it to 'X' point in the route at this time last week and this week you made it to that point faster while feeling stronger. It is always a good thing to measure your rate of improvement, this way you know whether the training is working or not.

A common pitfall when the training duration is increased is to under fuel for the work being completed. Think of your body as if it were the important components of your car, an engine (muscle), gas tank (stored and consumed energy), and a pumping system to route the gas (heart, blood, digestive system). Your car doesn't travel very far if you only have a gallon of gas in it. So, you must refill the tank over and over again to get any distance on a gallon at a time. Simply, our bodies work in a similar manner and we must try to keep our tanks as full as we can. This is not to say that you should stuff yourself with as much as possible, just try and maintain a steady flow of fuel into the system. Practicing feeding while on longer and longer durations will allow for the work to be steadier and power delivery more consistent. You also improve your fuel delivery and usage system to be more efficient, another component of fitness improvements.

Earn those saddle sores, get out this spring and plan to steadily increase your time out on the bike. Your efforts on the longer rides improve a plethora of physiological aspects of the body. As the saying goes, practice, practice, practice makes perfect. Being able to sustain a slightly faster speed at less energy usage means you can finish faster and feel better at the end of a century ride or multi-day event. This is the ultimate goal for anyone that trains for endurance improvement.

*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](mailto:rob@optimizeendurance.com)*



Preparation and specificity are key elements to an enjoyable event experience.

Set up for the longer duration ride...Depending on the event your training for, this may be more gear than you need to get the job done.