

Future Aspirations

By Rob Lockey, CSCS

For an endurance athlete, whether recreational or seasoned racer, to aspire from season to season and year to year, they must aim at achieving something. That something for most stamina based competitors is to have a faster time or finish 'on the podium'. To accomplish any of these desires, a process of goal setting will need to be followed. This procedure can be simple to complex, depending on the person and the ultimate aspiration.

Setting a goal, having great ambition to perform better, or prepare for the future is not a uniquely human characteristic. Most, if not all of the animal kingdom uses this trait to enhance life. As humans we, to a certain extent, take it to another level with the introduction of competition into our lives. To succeed at endurance sports, forecast, preparation and understanding of the event are paramount to achieving the goal.

Whether the goal is a 5k run in under twenty-five minutes or completing a one-hundred mile mountain bike race, the athlete needs to have a deep comprehension about the event. It is very hard to forecast or prepare for success if the length, difficulty and overall design of the event are not understood. Spend time analyzing the chosen goal, does it fit with the specific talents you bring to the table. Specificity, simply put, practicing the discipline you will be racing. If you're not much of a mountain bike rider, you will need to become more of one to do a mountain bike race.

To estimate or calculate in advance the desired outcome for an event is to forecast. This is generally the second step in the development of a goal. 'My goal is to finish the century ride in under 7hrs' would be a common set up of a forecast. Usually this is based off a previous attempt at the event or distance and other times it is just pulled out of thin air or confidence in one's self. Setting the forecast 'bar' too high, while not following through with the next steps of goal setting, typically ends in disappointment.

To reach the goal on event day, a state of readiness or preparation will need to be executed over many days, weeks, and months. First, start by determining the length of time to the competition. Second, lay out a game plan to steadily improve fitness. Third, begin the plan as soon as possible. While carrying out the plan, allow for times when life will get in the way and set an alternate plan to continue forward. Last, determine if your goal is 'reaching' meaning it will take great adherence to achieve, or if it is within reason. Planning for both scenarios will assist in accomplishing positive results in the end.

For future aspirations, take a step back and discover the unique specificity that will work best to reach the intended target. Whether the past goal has been reached or not, most athletes realign the goal for the next event. It is important to learn what worked and what could be done with more precision in the process. Analyze the progression that was followed and critically assess the areas that need improvements. This follow thru will reap rewards.

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