

## Get back to peak performance for the Fall!

by Kim Boere

As the racing season is in full swing for just a few more months, you may be finding yourself just plugging away. However, planning for the off season can be a huge part of ensuring a proper recovery, setting you up for an even better season next year and addressing any issues or concerns you may have with your performance now. Take these simple steps to evaluate and plan and you'll see even better results in your training.

First, ask yourself if you are satisfied with your current racing results. If yes, then planning for maintenance or improving performance will ensure continued success. But more importantly, if you are not satisfied with your results so far this season take a few moments to identify what the problem is. Not fast enough? Not recovering or feeling bad after racing? Are you experiencing any injuries or feeling strained?

If you are not fast enough or getting the finish times you had hoped for, start with evaluation. Getting a [Lactate Threshold test](#) can be a valuable tool to identify not only your LT number but also provide you with appropriate heart rate training zones to dial in your training to be effective and specific. If you don't know what your training zones are then your training may be too hard, not hard enough or not emphasizing how to improve your needed areas of training. For example, if you like to always push yourself on every workout (i.e. getting winded) then you may be losing out on the benefits of aerobic endurance training which can improve your body's ability to utilize more fat for fuel (think: saving carbs!) Having a specific approach to training is the best way to ensure structured training that keeps you on the right path to success.

Recovery is also a big indicator of the success of your season. If you are feeling tired, irritable or always sore, you may be overtraining. This can be critical to your overall health in the long run. Check your resting heart rate in bed, before you get up in the morning, for several days in a row. If you have an elevated number (this is assuming you know what it was before the season) then your body may be trying to tell you to rest more. Nutrition also plays a role in your recovery. If you aren't properly fueling before, during and after events then you can fall short on your performance. Start with logging your food to get a better picture. An easy tool can be found on [TrainingPeaks](#). This interactive website for athletes has a food logging option as well as exercise logging. If you need further feedback, contact a Sports Nutritionist or Registered Dietician for more detailed help.

And finally, if you are injured in any way, you may need to scale back your training season to avoid further damage. Remember, your "A" race should be the main event and any other races can be performed at a lower level for training purposes. If you are feeling nagging issues, remember that adding strength training, core work and flexibility are an essential part of a well rounded program. Avoiding these can make or break your performance as well as lead you on a path to injury. If you must push through an injury, be sure you are seeking the help of a professional.

So as the fall approaches take a close look at your current season and plan to incorporate solid recovery and rest, focused strength and flexibility and adequate nutrition to power you up for a well deserved off season that will have you excited for your next race season in 2012!

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