

“Great Expectations”

By Adam Fivehouse

As winter turns to spring, and trainer miles turn to road miles, we find ourselves having to resist the urge to blow off our structured training in order to spend every sunny hour on the road. “More miles can’t hurt”, is our typical justification. But quickly our rational selves usually get the best of us and we stay the course, our eyes keen on bigger things to come. We start to envision what the long season ahead might have in store. “This is going to be my year”, we always tell ourselves. The year where it’s all going to come together, the year that I’ll get that upgrade or set that new personal best. We’re already thinking about that first event of the season and how we will blow the competition out of the water on the back of an early season of strong training.

For many of us, experienced riders included, it can be nerve-racking lining up at the start of the first event of the year. Suddenly, yesterday’s confidence turns into today’s doubt and anxiety. “Have I trained enough? Am I fast enough? Did I eat enough? This rider next to me looks pretty fit...” Millions of things swirl through our heads before we’ve even made the first pedal stroke. In many ways, nervousness is a good thing. It’s a natural response to be anxious before what we perceive to be a major event in our lives. It heightens our mental state and prepares us for what is to come. Too much, however, and we begin to become stressed out.

Keep things in perspective. For most of us, the first event of the year is not our “A” event, the event which our whole year of training is built around. So, why do we treat it as such? Viewing this first event as a stepping stone to bigger and better things may be all we need to calm our nerves.

Treat the event like another training session. After all, a well-built training plan will take early season events into account during your build towards your “A” event. Use this opportunity to dial in your preparation, feed/hydration strategy or paceline and pack riding skills. And don’t be afraid to ride outside your comfort zone, even if it means coming up short in the end. Always take something away from these events and treat them as a lesson learned.

Use this opportunity to assess your current fitness. We can look at ride files and physiology tests all we want but often the best data is seen when we’re stacked up against the competition. Make sure to capture as much data from your event as possible and make notes of how you prepared for the event, how you felt before, during and after and what you learned from the event. Don’t be discouraged if you’re not quite at the level you expected yet, this is still just part of your training.

Reassess your training and goals. What areas am I lacking in? What do I need to continue to work on? Are my pre-season goals still realistic? These are all questions that should be answered. Maybe life has gotten in the way and training has had to take a backseat. Maybe your goals have changed. Both of these would require changes and an overhaul in your training plan. If you’re working with a coach, take the time to sit down with him or her and re-evaluate where you’re at and where you’re headed. If adjustments are necessary in order to meet your goals now is the time to make them.

Stay Positive. It’s still early in the season and there are still plenty of sun-soaked miles ahead.

Good luck and happy trails, or roads!

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