

## Pre-Event Warm-Up Strategies for Cyclists

By Rob Lockey, CSCS

With the 2008 season of events for cyclists in Colorado underway, I thought it would be good to present some strategies for preparation. Nutrition, equipment, trip planning, knowledge of the course and warm-up are a few of the items on the top of the list. Each one of the listed items is an important discussion and to focus on one will also involve points about the others. In this article I will discuss the warm-up strategies I have found to work well. From these general suggestions a more individual approach can and should be designed.

Everyone has heard the term 'warm-up' and although it has broad meaning, it can be very specific for the type of event. Finding the warm-up that is correct for a specific event can increase one's ability on the course. One of the first steps is to analyze the event; this will help decide the needed preparations. Knowledge of the distance, start time, type of event and expected duration are key thoughts to work on. The reason to ask so many questions is because the warm-up should have a similar design with a few small exceptions. Second, decide if the warm-up will be performed on a trainer or the road or trail. Both have their distinct advantages with allowing the warm-up to be specific.

If the distance of the event is long (several hours or more) in general, the warm-up time and/or distance will be short and lower in intensity. The reason for this comes from the pre-event energy storage that needs to be conserved. To perform a long hard bout of work prior to the event will start you off behind in fueling. Also in general the effort will be below lactate threshold for the duration of the event, so energy usage is lower and more constant. A warm-up strategy for a long distance event would be to spend fifteen to thirty minutes increasing heart rate up to just above lactate threshold or above comfort level. Once a steady state effort in this range is reached for five minutes, bring the heart rate back down to resting levels and head to the start area. Warm-up for an event not consisting of completion can actually be done during the event. It isn't necessary to perform a structured warm-up before.

If the distance of the event is short (less than 2 hours) in general, the warm-up time and/or distance will be long and higher in intensity. Pre-event energy storage, although important for the event, isn't needed to be spared as much in the warm-up due to the shorter nature of these events. With this strategy the warm-up will need to mimic the event and include high intensity bouts followed by recovery. Spend forty-five to sixty minutes increasing the heart rate to just below lactate threshold for steady state of about fifteen minutes. After this increase the intensity to max effort intervals consisting of a one minute effort and one minute recovery. This type of one to one movement through the ranges of heart rate will prepare the body for the longer higher intensity nature of short events. After four to ten minutes of the max efforts, bring the heart rate into recovery for five minutes and head to the start area.

What to eat and when is also a very individual thing. In general, eat a complete balanced meal, three hours before the race/event including adequate hydration. An hour prior to the race/event reduce the hydration intake and plan your nature break for the start area. Also during this hour before consume approximately one hundred calories; this should be something that is quickly absorbed like a gel, to top off fuel storage. Make sure to take along adequate fuel for continued feeding throughout the event. It is better to feed small amounts of calories over increments of time than to gorge on the hour, to avoid gastrointestinal distress.

Check equipment one last time before entering the start area. Make sure your helmet is on, tires set to the correct pressures, and correct gear selection for the start and finally the identification number provided by the promoter is displayed correctly.

Take this information discussed here and practice various strategies during training and then at an event that is low priority for you. Once a warm-up that works well is found, stick to it so that consistency dictates the success of a well designed plan.

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