

## Prepare for Successful Climbing

By Rob Lockey, CSCS

Turn that mountain into a molehill. Many cyclists mentally increase the size of a climb and let it tower over them, when a few simple processes can make the ascent more pleasant.

Mental preparation brings about a toughness that will help you perform better. Having an understanding of the elevation gained over the distance to the top and the types of pitches will help you to formulate a plan to attack it. Take your average climbing speed and the miles of the climb you want to do to assess the time it will take to ascend it. Nothing will be more crushing to your confidence than to know that you're still only halfway when you thought you would be at the top already. Cut the climb into manageable segments and take a break when you feel overwhelmed. Refocus by looking around and enjoying the scenery.

Gain power with on and off the bike strength training. Squats, leg curls/extensions, calf raises and planks/crunches are off-bike exercises for added strength. Force drills along with performing climbs are on-bike specifics to round out the climbing attributes needed to increase or just maintain speeds longer. Force drills are designed to improve the cyclist's ability to apply force to the pedals while becoming more efficient. An example would be lower cadence climbing which entails selecting a harder gear than normal to climb with. We're talking power increases so you can do more work at less cost.

Continuing on that last thought of cost, exercise adds to our use of fuels which can be measured as a cost. With adequate training a person can reduce their use of a fuel to perform the same amount of work. Think of it as the distance a hybrid car can travel on a gallon of gas vs. the distance a less efficient car can go on the same amount of gas. Training on climbs will assist you to use less fuels to get to the top. On this note the cyclist needs to learn to consume the correct amounts while climbing to maintain the current pace. This is a whole different subject that deserves its own article.

It's a given that when the grade pitches upwards the cyclist's rate of speed reacts in the opposite fashion. The hope is through practice of mental preparation, strength improvements and proper fueling the reduction of speed won't be as large.

*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)*



Now that's an ascent...preparation is key to enjoy the beauty of it.