

## **Training for a Cycling Endurance Event**

Training for endurance is straightforward, but not easy; the training principles are fairly straightforward but it is the application of these principles that is the challenge. The “Bandies on Bikes” cycle challenge is a multiday endurance event and on rides such as these which consist of riding day after day; the muscles will tire to a level that you are unlikely to have experienced before.

In training for such an event the goal is to build up your individual tolerance to the relentless nature of this type of cycling. This is done by building up the mileage gradually and getting used to being in the saddle for prolonged periods of time. To successfully complete an event that consists of riding 60-70 miles each day requires good preparation and use of correct techniques to ensure that we can achieve our optimum performance throughout. For anyone considering a multiday cycling challenge it is important to look at the typical distances that will be involved each day. Target the average stage distance and use it to form the base of your training. Take into account the climate and terrain that will be encountered and try to replicate these conditions in your training. It is often argued that those preparing for the marathon do not actually need to train over the same distance, and in agreement with this, construct your training so as to incorporate multiday activities but not over the full event distance.

There are 3 key training goals that you should work towards so that you provide yourself with the best possible preparation with which to take on and complete this cycling challenge;

1. You will need to learn to be able to ride back to back days with tired legs, and to experience the physical and mental challenge of being able to achieve this.
2. You will need to become aware of what you can eat and drink whilst on the bike. Figure out what sort of food or source of nutrition works for you and what sort of energy drinks you find work best for you. When you find something that works for you, use it for the rest of your training rides and especially for your target event.
3. It is important to include recovery time within your training schedule; a good aim is to have one week per month that is low in the volume of training so that you give yourself time to absorb the amount of training that you have done.

What follows is a rough and very generic plan of action with which I would recommend that you base your training on, it is important to pay particular attention to the volume of training that is included. What is indicated here should be seen as an absolute minimum that needs to be completed in order to be successful in completing this challenge.

### **January & February**

You should be riding 2-3 days during the week for a period of 1-1.5hrs at a comfortable pace. If you have a Heart Rate monitor this will be at 65-75% of your max HR, or at a pace that is comfortable enough to be able to have a conversation.

At this time you will need to be including a long ride at the weekend, be in the saddle for a period of 2-3hrs and try and ride at a comfortable pace. The route you take should be varied and not all done on the flat. It helps to do these long rides in one loop or one out-and-back. Then, if you are at least halfway and start to tire, the fastest way home is to keep going. Use this long ride to experiment with eating and drinking on the move, and to try out different means of nutrition; bananas, gels, sports drinks etc.

### **March & April**

You should be aiming to ride 3 days during the week for a period of 1-1.5hrs again at a comfortable pace. If you are feeling strong then maybe increase one of the weekly rides to 2hrs.

By now you will have built up enough base fitness to be putting in 2 good rides at the weekend. Saturday 2-4 hrs over varied terrain and Sunday 3-5hrs at a moderate pace; during these longer rides try to get into the habit of taking in some form of nutrition every 30mins or so, this will enable you to sustain yourself over a longer period and will hopefully prevent you from hitting the wall or 'bonking'!!

## **May**

As the event approaches you will need to taper down your training, the bulk of the work will have been done and at this point you will be just ticking over in preparation.

For the first 10 days in May you need to ride every other day for about 1hr per day. Then rest for 2-3 days before doing a 2-3hr ride over varied terrain. After this make sure that you have 3 days of rest before the event starts.

The long ride in your training makes up half of your weekly training volume and is the most important component. To be able to build your base level of fitness, increase your endurance and try to get comfortable on the bike, you just need to get out and ride. Pace yourself on the long rides so that you feel good at the end. You may want to do these with other riders to make them safer and more fun, but don't try to race each other. If you can't carry on a continuous conversation at any time during the long ride (excluding the climbs) then you are going too hard. The primary purpose of this ride is to have the slowest rider feel good at the finish. Each rider will get the desired benefits, even if they feel that they are "loafing" through most of it.

You need to ride at least four days a week to get fitter, so try hard to fit in the rides. One of the best ways to get in regular rides is commuting, plus it will save you money on fuel. Another option is a spinning session or riding a turbo trainer. You're better off riding briskly for 45 minutes three nights a week, than getting out for a couple of hours only one evening. You will not be capable of building the necessary levels of endurance by condensing this sort of training, there are no short cuts; that why it is a challenge.

On completion of your long rides it is important to eat correctly and take on fluids so that you aid your recovery process. To have a successful recovery following a day's riding, there are some easy steps that you can take, to help yourself. Start the recovery process whilst you are still on the bike, encourage yourself to drink fluids and consume adequate food; fluid and electrolyte replenishment is crucial in maintaining cardiac output and regulating your body temperature during exercise; any elevations in body temperature can have a massive effect on your performance. Fluid replacement must occur both during and after exercise, the electrolytes that are found in sports hydration drinks can accelerate re-hydration by speeding intestinal re-absorption of fluids and improving fluid retention. These drinks are not a gimmick, they work.

Often you will find that your thirst mechanism is insufficient in motivating you in your quest to restore your fluid and electrolyte balance. You must be proactive in taking on fluids containing electrolytes throughout and after the ride, get into the habit of taking a full water bottle with you wherever you go if you are holding it, you will drink it; never find yourself feeling thirsty!

This is an overview of how your training should pan out, with the workloads that we all have I realise that training is hard to fit in but be flexible and you will achieve it; but it is imperative that corners are not cut otherwise you will struggle to complete this challenging event. Approach it in a positive way and importantly remember the reasons why we are undertaking such a challenge. If you feel that you need any other advice please get in contact.

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