

Happy New Year!

No, I'm not getting ahead of myself. I'm referring to the training new year. As I work with cyclists, I always have them begin their new training year on November 1. Why November 1? If you think about the cycling year, most major rides and races are over by November 1. Therefore, that date represents the start of the training season for the next season. As I reviewed in last month's column, (<http://www.dmcycleclub.com/images-content/newsletters/October2008.pdf>), the training year is broken up into various phases based on seasons. If you have been training and riding seriously all year, this is the time to take a break and give yourself some time off of serious training. This is called the Transition Period and is meant to give your body and your mind a break from structured training. Now, it doesn't give you freedom to become a sloth and do nothing. Stay active but now is the time to do some other activities called 'cross training'. Examples include hiking, jogging/running, inline skating, or any activity that will get your heart rate up. The key here is to have some fun while doing some different cardiovascular activities off the bike. You can still ride your bike of course, but nothing hard core – just get out and ride and enjoy what good weather we have left.

You can continue to do cross training throughout the winter for variety and to take advantage of the winter. You can do ice skating, snow shoeing and cross country skiing. This is also a good season to get your mountain bike back out and head for the woods to get out of the cold wind. It's amazing how warm you can get mountain biking in the woods when it is 20 degrees out. Our race team usually trains on the trails behind the Art Center down by Ashworth Pool in Des Moines. There are miles of single track trails back there maintained by Central Iowa Trails Association ([CITA](#)).

But the fall and winter is not a time to stop riding. Please, please, please, don't hang up your bike until spring. One of the major changes I make with cyclists who want to get stronger and faster is to keep them riding through the winter. Instead of having to start over completely from scratch in the spring, carry some of your hard-earned fitness from this year through the winter and into next spring. You can actually increase your fitness during the winter as well. There are three main areas you can work on during the winter and I'll review them here:

1) Strength – Winter is a great time to get into a strength routine for several reasons. A) You have more time because you aren't able to ride as much, B) It gives you some variety for indoor training, and C) Doing leg strength training can interfere with riding so it is best to do it during the winter when you aren't riding as much. I always recommend that cyclists to do some upper body strength training. Cycling is great for the legs but doesn't do much for the upper body so use the winter to build some muscle balance in your whole body. Don't forget to incorporate core (abs and back) exercises as well. The winter is a good time to build up your strength which you lose during the summer when you are mostly riding your bike. Not only will this help your cycling, but more importantly, it will help you to be more fit all-around. It is also important to do strength training for your bone health. Cycling is not a weight bearing exercise and some cyclists have low bone density. Therefore, doing weights is something we can do to help in this regard.

2) Base Conditioning – While it may be difficult to get out and do long rides for more than an hour or two during the winter, try to find ways to get at least a 1-2 hour workout in every week. As

mentioned earlier, mountain biking is a way to get a long ride in when its cold. Or, go hiking, ice skating, cross country skiing or snow shoeing as a way to get out and work on maintaining some of your base conditioning. Of course, there is always the indoor trainer, but you have to be super motivated to put in a two hour ride indoors on your trainer, so this is only a last resort.

3) Aerobic fitness – Your indoor trainer is a great tool to use to maintain aerobic fitness during the winter, however. While it's tough to get your endurance in this way, it's quite easy to get in a good, hard, short aerobic workout. In 45 minutes of hard work, you can do a great job maintaining and even building cardiovascular fitness over the winter, especially if you haven't been doing this type of workout during the summer. I like to prescribe what I call 'Aerobic Intervals'. Most people associate intervals with gut busting efforts. Aerobic intervals are not like this. They force you to work harder than normal but below your anaerobic threshold. The Anaerobic zone is where you get out of breath, go cross-eyed and lose your lunch – we're not going there, yet. Aerobic intervals are hard and require concentration but do not get into the anaerobic range. An example of an indoor aerobic interval workout is shown here:

10 min warmup

2 min hard aerobic effort

2 min easy spinning

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Repeat this sequence for a total of 7 times

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Cool down 5 min

This gives you a great workout in less than 45 minutes. And because you are doing timed intervals, the time goes by relatively quickly.

Do one of these aerobic workouts a couple times a week all winter and you will have built a great aerobic fitness base by spring. Combine this with 2-3 days of strength training and one longer conditioning workout a week and you have a very solid well-rounded offseason training program. So, take a little time off from training (but not exercising), and then get started on 2009!

Happy New Year!

Coach David Ertl

David Ertl is a USA Cycling Level 1 (Elite) Coach. He is the lead coach with the DMCC/DMOS/Bike World Race Team and the coach for the JDRF Greater Iowa Chapter for the Ride to Cure Diabetes, and he coaches individual cyclists. He is also an NSCA certified Personal Trainer. He is accepting new coaching clients and can be contacted at Coach@CyclesportCoaching.com or at 515-689-1254.