

The Art of Endurance Training

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Energize or exhaust? The answer to this question could very well depend on the type of workouts you coach. Ideally, a properly periodized exercise plan should consistently energize your participants and rarely leave them exhausted. As a Spinning® Instructor, your primary goal is to safely coach your students to help them realize their individual goals. To help them do that, you must first appreciate each student as a unique athlete—with individual strengths and gifts—regardless of age, size or ability. As a coach, your job is to work with each person's unique potential. Often, this means helping students understand exactly what they want to achieve. Remember, action follows thought and body follows mind.

To better understand your students' goals, it can help to take a look at some of the most recent fitness industry trends. According to the Sporting Goods Manufacturing Association (SGMA), men and women join health clubs for similar reasons. The number one reason women join is weight control, whereas men join to enhance muscle definition and tone. Interestingly enough, men and women had the same top five reasons for exercising: weight control, increased health and well being. Although the two groups prioritized their reasons for exercise differently (men's top reason: strength building; women's: self-esteem), men and women still share the same overall goals: stress reduction, flexibility, personal time, enjoyment, strength building and improved self-esteem.

Think of endurance training as base-building—a foundation that lays the groundwork to help your students achieve their goals. As defined by the Spinning program, the elements of an Endurance Energy Zone™ (EZ) ride are Hand Position 1, a Seated Flat and 65-75% of maximal heart rate target. During a true Endurance EZ ride, riders should not stand for more than thirty seconds at a time—and only when needed—to stretch their legs, relax their upper body or shift their saddle position.

Endurance training challenges the mind and the body. Only a conditioned body and a focused mind can create a consistent, steady heart rate, a flowing form and a quiet mind for an extended period of time. That's why the use of a heart rate monitor is essential in endurance training—to monitor and maintain a consistent heart rate and rate of perceived exertion (RPE) over time. Over the course of an endurance training session, a rider's perceived exertion will rise because of their emotional state, focus, form deterioration, and/or the accumulation of metabolic waste products. Heart rate generally follows suit. As RPE changes, so will heart rate. On the other hand, riders who have well-developed mental focus and strength oftentimes do not experience a correlating rise in heart rate. Therefore, the key to endurance training is to develop an even application of physical energy and mental strength over an extended period of time.

Physiologically, developing endurance improves performance because it trains your body to use oxygen efficiently (aerobic training), delivering it to the working muscles through the development of the capillary network and the entire cardiovascular system. It also trains your body to use fat as a preferred fuel—sparing stored sugar and glycogen and minimizing post-



exercise sugar cravings and probable over consumption of calories. It is primarily through endurance training that the body develops an ability to use fat as a primary fuel. The utilization of fat as a preferred fuel for muscular contraction occurs below lactate threshold, or between heart rate parameters of approximately 50-80% of maximal heart rate. Although these percentages are just estimates and may vary widely with each individual, remember that once lactate accumulates, fat utilization is impaired.

Endurance training also strengthens the immune system, reduces injuries, increases energy, increases efficiency and develops mental focus. All of these directly correspond to the reasons why people exercise! Training anaerobically, while important, may only be effectively undertaken once a student establishes a strong aerobic base. It typically takes a person 8-12 weeks, training aerobically 4-6 times per week for approximately 40 minutes each session (some longer sessions are recommended), to develop a strong aerobic base. Endurance training (a.k.a. Aerobic Base Building) takes patience—there are no shortcuts. Always incorporate Recovery, Endurance and low-end Strength EZTM rides in your training plan.

The key to endurance training is exercising below lactate threshold. A simple barometer of lactate threshold is whether you can breathe in and out of your nose. If so, chances are you are exercising below your threshold.

We all know that a hard training session doesn't always mean it's better for you. As coaches, it is our primary responsibility to help students reach their goals. We can energize and inspire them through proper training or ignore their needs and make them needlessly suffer through rides that have no depth—just intensity. In fact, intense rides and elevated heart rates usually take people farther away from their goals. Teach your students to work out smarter—not necessarily harder—and get them one step closer to a healthy body and mind.

One easy way to do this is by using visualization and imagery to help your students understand the importance of endurance training. Encourage them to think of training like a large tree. Endurance and Recovery EZTM rides are the strong foundation—the roots and trunk of the tree. Strength and Interval EZTM rides are the upper part and branches, and Race Day forms the top. Too many students have their trees planted upside down—they train with the mantra of higher, harder and faster.

As a Spinning® Instructor, you have the power to help your students learn the importance of a proper and balanced training program. You have the unique ability to touch people one at a time. Reach out to someone today.

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