

Periodization

by Johnny G

The first of the year is always a great time to reassess where you are and to plan on taking yourself to another level physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Hopefully we are already on the path, but being human beings there's always room for improvement. This article will deal with a light and diverse overview and some ideas, that we hope will broaden your scope and outlook on a topic called periodization.

Periodization, the art of varied training, is a training methodology that involves various types and intensities of training scheduled specifically to achieve improved fitness and performance. It is characterized by four periods: aerobic, strength, anaerobic and rest, which are usually conducted in the listed order over the course of a calendar year. In the Spinning® program, the phases of periodization are expressed in what we call Energy Zones™, a training system that is specific to the Spinning program. This method of conditioning utilizes a variety of heart rate (HR) training zones to create a balanced fitness regimen.

Before you plan how to get somewhere, you have to decide where you want to go. Is the goal to lose weight, participate in a race, or just feel better? And before you can do that, you have to assess where you are. Prior to engaging in a periodized training schedule on the Spinner® or any other equipment, you should find out where you are cardiovascularly. Participate in a VO2 max test to gain the feedback needed to create a proper program. Once you set up a goal, then you can start training toward it. Believe it or not, this is the most difficult thing in exercise. Working out is relatively easy, but working out with a result-oriented plan takes time, thought, patience and a global perspective.

Most students come to us looking for health, weight loss and feel-good goals. To help create their training plans, we have to take certain things into account: time, inactivity, nutrition, rest, and lifestyle for general well being. When goals become more specific, such as training for a specific event, then the program becomes more intricate. Monitoring improvement is important, but we can't forget to count enthusiasm, attitude, excitement, creativity, and the desire and willingness to show up as improvements in and of themselves.

The Spinning program is a specific, cardiovascular, performance-oriented training system—a microview of an overall training system. With a periodization schedule based on the Spinning Energy Zones, an individual could balance a 7-day training week over a period of months without burning out, overtraining or diminishing thresholds and performance. Whether your student base is highly trained athletes or individuals with general goals, the program engages them in a training system that develops strength and stamina, allows them to lose body fat, incrementally improve their endurance and well being where they feel powerful and enthusiastic.

It is the periodized schedule that makes this happen. Here's how it works:

For most of us, January through March is winter. We are coming off the holidays and pos-



sibly a long hard year of working a job. Weather plagues us, and the desire to train outdoors is at a low. Contrary to our New Year's Resolution instincts, this is not the time to worry about how we look and push for a quick 5- or 10-pound weight loss goal. Rather, we should dedicate this time to building or reconstructing our foundation, reconnecting to ourselves and beginning to evaluate and lay out a base.

An ideal base program should consist of the following parameters: Endurance Energy Zone™, 30-40 minutes, 3 times per week, combined with cross training and flexibility exercises. The Endurance Energy Zone is ideal because it is performed at a moderate heart rate (65-75% of MHR) and an acceptable pace (80-110 RPM). It is geared to burn body fat, flush and oxygenate the muscle tissue, and contribute to consistency and depth. It does not require a lot of speed, strength, or commitment. It's almost like an introduction that begins to build on itself. Your desire and enthusiasm to work and to begin dealing with more intensity naturally grows. I look at this as a period of finding a natural rhythm that comes from within the body's natural structure. It does not come from a rigid or regimented mind.

March through May, we begin to build strength using the Strength Energy Zone. Thanks to our base-building period, our tendons, ligaments, hamstrings, back and triceps are now adaptive and ready to start taking on more work. We increase our heart rate slightly (75-85% of MHR) but begin to load the muscle with more resistance. This opportunity is a good time to go through a dietary shift. Be conscious of carbohydrates and amino acid replacement so the muscles can grow and develop in strength and contraction. This strength phase allows us to move to the anaerobic phase to develop strength within the muscle, tenacity and perseverance. Mentally, we start to become committed to our goal, reaching deeper and further into making it philosophically to the top of the mountain. The end of May is a perfect opportunity to continue cross training: Yoga, Pilates, hiking, walking are excellent activities for the hips, ankles and lower back. Try working on the beach, paddling, cross training in the water, using stairs once/twice a week to develop timing, rhythm and overall strength, power and coordination. The cross training benefits are incredible, which is why MDA includes programming of various forms of training into its World Spinning® and Sports Conferences.

June, July and August become hot. Time to strip down and get into a high performance phase. We begin training in the Interval Energy Zone, taking advantage of a wide range of training heart rates (65-92% of MHR), knowing full well that speed work and intervals have a tendency to get the body very fit, very quickly. Here, we find a peak, but don't be fooled—it is difficult to maintain. So this technique is reserved for three to four weeks of training, six at the absolute max. During this time, diet and nutrition take another shift. The base is developed, so the body will be fully adaptive, willing to handle some stress. It will work diligently. The interval period should be complimented with hot and cold baths, hot tubs, light swimming, massage therapy and plenty of rest.

After intervals is a two- to three-week speed training period consisting of a Race Day pace: a high-intensity (80-92% of MHR) phase. For some of us this means achieving a level where we have an abundance of energy and strength with perfect body weight and maximum fitness potential for ourselves. For others it may be highlighted by a specific athletic competition or a goal that has been contemplated all year.



From November, after Thanksgiving to January is a perfect opportunity to return to the Recovery Energy Zone™ and ease into Endurance. It is a time of spinning the legs in a fixed gear, meaning one gear and one resistance tempo throughout the class at a consistent RPM. It is a time for enjoying the fruits and labor of a hard year, socializing, watching movies, reading great books, yet not feeling deprived, so that it is never necessary to put on more than 5 pounds over base weight.

This program is relatively simple, and it's broad enough to be modified for your individual needs. Each season builds on itself. It is said in the cycling world, anywhere above seven seasons begins to mold and form a cyclist. For those of you currently working on teaching skills and personal goals, never stop believing in your plan and stick to it. And always be aware that even the greatest program has its flaws, and you will need to be willing to adjust your training by how you feel.

Spinning Instructor News, February 2003, Vol. 6, Issue 12

For more information,
visit www.spinning.com.

