

Musing McKinney

Gimme a Break -- This regimen isn't fun any more.

By: Scott McKinney

Every year about this time, my training buddy says something like: "I'm having a hard time recovering after last week." After four to six months of concentrating on a series of training and race goals, I feel the same way. I've had some odd muscle spasms; had a longer-than-normal recovery; been tired; and lacked power (but enough about my sex life).

Following one training epic in early summer, I couldn't get my Heart Rate over 115 for three days. Even when I rode hard with the group late in the week, I never felt "on." While a steady build up is required to attain a high level of fitness, it is incredibly difficult to maintain peak form for an extended period. Being "on form" taxes both physical and mental abilities. Your body breaks down after losing weight and being under constant stress. It also requires significant mental focus to manage the intangibles necessary to peak at the right time.

Given the spacing of big goals over the season however, taking a month off in June isn't an option. After all, the next goal is coming up fast. Nevertheless, there are ways to obtain some immediate relief. Depending on your degree of fatigue, this may not be something you can put off. You may need to do it now to avoid more serious, chronic problems. Here are some ideas to help you get fresh again. Some of them are diametrically opposed, so don't attempt to do them all:

1. Take a day or two off the bike. It's good therapy and won't impact your conditioning. After a few days away you'll actually want to ride again rather than seeing cycling as a chore. (This assumes your training is a full time, 6-day-a-week program.)
2. Think out and plan training blocks around your goals. Two weeks hard. One week easy. That's training 101, but it helps to remember it now and then.
3. Get your jollies in some other way. Do something different for your endorphin fix (swim, rollerblade, run, hike). Or, use your break to complete home-owner projects.
4. Stop being a puss. Suck it up and keep your eye on the prize. Sometimes, when you get rolling, you'll feel just fine.
5. Seeing the same old "ass" up the road can get old. Ride with new people. Or, ride with a rookie and help them get better.

6. Ride a completely different route than you've been busting out every week. A change of scenery, road conditions, etc. can be dramatic, even if you're tired.

7. Be patient. Recovery from an epic with massive miles and climbing can take a week -- even for someone with a high level of conditioning. Back your training down a notch and taper before the big one.

8. Go to bed an hour before your normal bed time. Better yet, take a mid-day nap. This pro trick is used by athletes in nearly every sport.

In the end, taking a little time off in mid-season will position you for a stellar second half.

Learn More: The preceding ideas are some thing's I've learned over the years. The following link takes you to an awesome article, written by a real coach, about what pro cyclists do for their mid-season break.

Enjoy: <http://www.pezcyclingnews.com/?pg=fullstory&id=5012&status=True>