Holmes Fitness Coaching

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The Basics of Periodization

In the last issue of Performance Cycling, I introduced the 4 principles of training: periodization, progressive overload, specificity and individuality. In this issue, I review periodization in greater detail.

Periodization is the process of dividing an annual training plan into specific time blocks, where each block has a particular objective and provides the body with different types of stress. This creates some periods of training that are harder and some that are easier (to allow for recovery). It also facilitates the development of different energy systems during various phases of training (e.g., aerobic, anaerobic, creatine phosphate). Most importantly, periodization is the most effective way to facilitate the *training effect*. The training effect consists of changes in your cardiopulmonary and muscular systems that result in greater endurance on the bike. There are 3 basic principles of periodization:

1. The primary goal of periodization is to prepare the body for peak performance at a designated time of the year. Want to ride a fast century? Finish in the top 10 at a local road race? Perhaps your goal is to set a personal best in your state time trial championships. A periodized training program is the most effective way to achieve your goals because it allows you to gradually enhance your cycling performance so that you peak at the time of your most important events. For example, if your key event is in late June, you can develop an annual training plan that allows you to peak at the beginning of summer. If you have several key events during the season you can design a plan that allows for multiple peaks over a period of several months.

2. Training should progress from the general to the specific through a series of stages. For example, many annual training programs for competitive cyclists are divided into four stages: **base**, **build**, **race** and **transition**. The *base* period is the most general of these stages. During this training phase, the cyclist focuses on enhancing aerobic endurance and increasing general strength. This often includes 'off-the-bike' activities such as weight training. It also includes incremental increases in the volume of training (e.g., lots of miles) while keeping training intensity relatively low. As the cyclist advances to the *build* phase, more time is spent on the bike performing workouts that simulate race conditions. Here, volume is maintained (or slightly decreased) while intensity increases significantly. The *build* phase typically includes a great deal of 'interval' work designed to increase speed and the ability to ride hard for extended periods. The *race* phase involves actual race competition, the most specific element of training.

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Author:

Dr. Tyrone A. Holmes, Ed.D, CPT

USA Cycling Level 2 Certified Coach

ACE Certified Personal Trainer

President and Owner

T.A.H. Performance Consultants, Inc.

Holmes Fitness Coaching

Dr. Tyrone A. Holmes, Ed.D, LPC, CPT

President & Owner

T.A.H. Performance Consultants, Inc.

&

Holmes Fitness Coaching

30307 Sterling Drive
Novi, MI 48377

Phone: (248) 669-5294
Fax: (248) 669-5295

tyrone@doctorholmes.net

www.holmesfitness.com

Cycle-Max Coaching

It is with great pleasure that I introduce my Cycle-Max Coaching program. Cycle-Max Coaching is a one-on-one, virtual coaching process that will maximize your cycling performance. It is based on the idea that there are three primary elements to effective performance: *training*, *nutrition* and *recovery*. The primary goal of Cycle-Max Coaching is to facilitate the integration of these elements in a way that allows you to achieve your cycling goals. In other words, through the Cycle-Max Coaching process, we work together to develop a systematic training program that incorporates effective nutritional practices and allows for sufficient recovery. To learn more about Cycle-Max Coaching, visit my website at www.holmesfitness.com and request a FREE CONSULTATION to begin the process that will maximize your cycling performance.

The Basics of Periodization (continued)

Here, high intensity workouts continue, often in the form of race participation. Of paramount importance is the implementation of the peaking process to ensure the cyclist enters key races in top form. Once the competitive season has ended, the cyclist enters the *transition* stage where training activities once again become more general (e.g., cross-training workouts such as running or swimming). Most significantly, each of these phases elicit varying degrees of stress on the body's energy, cardiopulmonary and neuromuscular systems, which helps facilitate performance improvement.

3. **The key to successful periodization is to develop specific aspects of fitness during a given phase, while maintaining others developed in earlier phases**. For example, the main goal during the *base* phase is to increase aerobic endurance. Therefore, the cyclist will perform many long steady rides at a relatively low intensity. The *build* stage consists of much higher intensity rides, but it does no good to perform a lot of short, hard rides if your aerobic endurance suffers. Therefore, a well-designed training plan will build upon and enhance the development from previous stages. For instance, while much of the *build* stage will focus on the development of speed and the ability to ride continuously at a relatively high intensity, it will also include some long steady rides at lower intensities to maintain the aerobic fitness developed in the earlier stage. Conversely, the training performed in later stages is made possible because of the foundation built in earlier stages. Without the endurance training of the *base* stage, the high intensity training of the *build* and *race* stages wouldn't be possible. This "pyramid" approach is what allows the cyclist to gradually build to a peak at the most desirable time of the year.

About the Author

Dr. Tyrone A. Holmes, LPC, CPT is a speaker, trainer, consultant, fitness & cycling coach, author and competitive cyclist.