



Performance Cycling

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Rating of Perceived Exertion

In the last few issues of Performance Cycling, I introduced the concept of “training with heart rate” and described several methods you can use to create Heart Rate Training Zones using the Age Formula, the Karvonen Heart Rate Reserve method and Lactate Threshold Heart Rate. While this provides extremely useful information, a more simple way to measure training intensity is through rating of perceived exertion (RPE).

RPE is a subjective measure of intensity based on how hard a particular effort feels to the athlete. In this high tech age of power meters and heart rate monitors, rating of perceived exertion is often overlooked, which is a mistake. It is very important to use RPE in conjunc-

tion with power and/or heart rate measures. You need to know what a Zone 4 effort feels like without electronic feedback. This is one of the most effective ways to get in touch with your body and how it feels under varying levels of training stress. By no means am I suggesting that RPE should replace heart rate monitors and power meters. Only that using these techniques in conjunction with technology will make you a better all around cyclist.

There are several scales available to quantify rating of perceived exertion. The first and most well known is the Borg RPE Scale. It consists of a numerical scale from 6 to 20 with 6 representing very, very easy effort and 20 representing the absolute hardest effort possible. The Borg Scale is

designed to correlate directly with heart rate by simply adding a zero to the corresponding number. For example, on the Borg Scale 13 represents a somewhat hard effort. This is designed to correlate with a heart rate of 130. Likewise, a 19 represents a very, very hard effort which correlates to a heart rate of 190.

Of course, the problem with these correlations is they assume an individual has a maximum heart rate of 200. This will not be the case for many people. Therefore, a simpler rating scale of 1 to 10 (known as the Borg Modified Scale) is often used with 1 representing the easiest effort and 10 representing the hardest effort possible. For example, 3-4 would be considered moderate intensity and would cor-



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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.

Rating of Perceived Exertion (continued)

About the Author

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



respond to a Zone 2 effort. 5-6 would represent a hard effort and would correspond to Zone 3 whereas 7-8 symbolizes the very intense effort that you experience when training at lactate threshold (Zone 4). Of course, 9-10 results from the extremely hard efforts that take you into Zone 5.

Whichever scale you use (I recommend the Borg Modified Scale), get in the habit of assessing workout intensity using RPE. A simple way to do this is to record subjective effort level in your training log along with more objective measures such as heart rate. For example, if you are performing a series of Zone 4 intervals, you will likely feel the effort is very hard (RPE of 7-8). By recording this on a regular basis, you will begin to get a conscious sense of what a Zone 4 interval 'feels like', even in the absence of a heart rate monitor or other form of technology. Likewise, if you are recovering from a very hard effort, you will likely feel the effort is relatively easy (RPE of 1-2). By developing a good sense of what this feels like, you can be sure that you are training at the proper intensity to facilitate effective recovery.