



“Off Season” Training Tips

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Fall is in the air and football season has started, which is probably signaling the end of your Triathlon season if it hasn't already ended for the year. Time to hit the couch, pack away calories and hibernate after another great racing season, right?

While the “off” season is definitely a great time for rest, recovery and reflection, it is definitely not the time to kick your feet up and back track on all of the fitness gains you made this past season. In fact, it is a great time of year to focus on your limiters while maintaining a solid aerobic base in order to set yourself up for another PR season. So, think twice this year before taking the typical off-season approach to your endurance training.

There are some general principles you can apply to training in the off-season that are definite musts. You absolutely must keep your training fun. Training in the off-season can even be semi-unstructured to the point where you aren't concerned with hitting specific workout targets or making it to masters three times per week. It is important that while you continue to train you must allow yourself the mental break from that ultra-structured training. Once you've tackled your mindset you can focus on some of the more detailed tips that follow to help set yourself up for your best race season yet.

Preparation

Some great philosopher once said “Failure to plan is planning to fail”. What a true statement for all of life's activities, including sport. Now that you have gotten into a good mental state this is the best time to reflect on your past seasons strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and performances in order to better plan and prepare for next season. Use this information to help build S.M.A.R.T. goals for next season. S.M.A.R.T. goals are specific, measurable, actionable/achievable, realistic/relevant, and timely. Outline your goals for next season, prospective races, and work with your coach to begin developing the appropriate action plan that will help you achieve success in a SMART manner; safe, injury free and happy when you cross the finish line at next years A race.

Base Training

Unlike a lot of coaches, I recommend that you pack away your heart rate monitor, power meter and Garmin – at least for some workouts, if not all, during a couple month period of unstructured off-season training. At this point you've gotten your head back on straight after a tough race season, begun a sound planning process for next year and can further benefit by taking the stress out of hitting targets, staying within zones, which will allow you to focus on becoming more in tune with your body. Most training during this time of year should be relatively low in intensity, but feel free to add significant volume so long as you are doing it safely and your current fitness level can accommodate that volume. Build a

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strong engine now so you can focus on increasing acceleration during the season and remember that the bigger the base, the higher the peak.

Limiters

You have reflected on this past season and been able to identify some strengths and weaknesses. Use this information to capitalize on focusing on your limiters during this time of year. Incorporate drills into your workouts for whatever those limiters may be and even shift your volume away from your strong disciplines to your weaker disciplines. By adding a large base and improving your limiters in the off season you are setting yourself up for success in next year's race season.

Strength Training

Leverage a little less daylight and unruly weather to tackle more indoor workouts. Those indoor workouts don't have to be on the trainer or treadmill either. This is a great time to focus on building strength in the weight room that can go a long way to improving your while also preventing injury and preparing your body for next year's volume and intensity. Specifically, you want to focus on multi-joint compound exercises for optimal strength gains, but can also include plyometric and functional sport specific exercises that will help improve performance as well.

Core Training

Core training is broken out from strength training because it is really that important. These often neglected muscles can experience significant strength decline during the season, especially when much of your bike time is spent in the aero position; however, building a strong core has been proven to stimulate significant performance gains independently. You can include a stability ball, bosu ball, or other stability apparatus with your strength training to force your core to engage during normal strength training, but you should also focus on performing abdominal and core work separate from your strength training to achieve the best results.

Nutrition

Another big favor you can do yourself is not going gangbusters at the holiday parties and dinners during the winter season. While you can eat a bit more freely and definitely don't need to obsess over your nutrition, the better you can manage your weight during these months the easier it will be to maintain strength and fitness as you work towards your racing weight next season.