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Train Smart

By Bikin' Mike Keel

Proper Preparation: One does not take their bicycle out of the shed, dust it off and expect to ride 100 miles in 100 degree weather. Your bike needs to be prepared and so do you.

Several months leading into the 35th HHH endurance ride, here are some great ways to build your fitness and develop your cycling skills so you're ready for the upcoming challenges.

Training Rides: Ride one to two times during the weekdays. These rides should be 1 to 2 hours long (15 to 30 miles) and be at moderate intensity. Regular time in the saddle and heat help condition saddle muscles while you get used to riding in the heat.

On weekends, riders should do graduated distance rides, with distances based on the HHH route they're targeting. For example, we suggest 100-mile riders build up to 100k rides by the end of May and continue to ride those 100k rides through the end of July. This helps you build up your ability to handle heat well and also develop your hydration and energy/fuel management techniques.

100K riders should work up to 35 to 45 mile weekend rides and stick with that distance through June and into the middle of July.

The idea is to allow your body to build fitness while you're training. In our experience, riding lots of longer rides during the big heat of the summer tends to wear down those people who train 10 to 15 hours each week. You will have time to ramp up your distance in the last 5 weeks leading up to the HHH.

Heat: When heat is 91 degrees or higher, the outside environment is hostile to your body and body chemistry, even if you're only walking outside. When you start exercising in that heat, your body has a whole lot more battles to fight, and it takes a lot of calories and hydration to manage core temperature.

Hydration: When going on long rides, cyclists need to be drinking water before, during, and after the ride. We can't do what I call episodic drinking, which is riding 10 miles and then slamming down one or two bottles. We need to be drinking consistently in little bits at a time. I love a Camelbak for the simple reason that the

straw over my shoulder makes it easier to remember to drink a little bit every 3 to 5 minutes. **Caution:** Never drink so much that you get that “sloshy belly” feeling.

For the first two hours of a longer ride – a ride that average riders may need 4 to 6 hours saddle time to finish - it’s important to set the tone early with your hydration.

A lot of people wait two hours to take their first drink because they didn’t feel thirsty. If you don’t drink water in your first two hours, problems will often occur in the final two to three hours of your ride. The same thing is true with how you consume calories.

Nutrition: Dinner fuels the morning and breakfast fuels the afternoon. When you’re planning a long ride, even if you don’t feel hungry early in the morning, it’s important to eat breakfast, so your energy doesn’t fade when you’re riding into the afternoon. For those really long rides of 4-plus hours, make sure you’re eating 125 calories per hour so that you don’t “bonk.”

We encourage good hydration and nutrition practices in training rides, so that you will be much better at managing your resources on the day of the HHH ride.

We also teach our clients to maintain consistent nutrition, because our nutrition and hydration, through the week, affect every ride we go on.

What kind of Nutrition: At every meal, we need proteins, carbs and fats, but when you look at the meals right before a ride, we don’t need a high-fat meal.

We are doing a lot of muscular activity in our preparation for the actual HHH, and muscle is not rebuilt with fats or carbs, it’s rebuilt with protein. We need reasonable 4 to 6 ounce servings of protein. That can generally mean grilled meats fish, chicken, pork and beef. You should intake more carbs than protein. Fat calories should only be about 15-20% percent of your meal.

Breakfast: Where many cyclists have problems is not with the dinner they eat the night before a ride, but rather the breakfast they eat before the ride. Dinner fuels the morning AND breakfast fuels the afternoon. On a 100-mile ride, you will be on your bike in the afternoon. On ride days, add some carbs and protein to your breakfast oatmeal or have two bowls. Skipping breakfast before a long ride will generate problems in the latter stages of a long ride.

Nutrition on the Ride: During our ride, we should eat small amounts of food/high energy snacks. On a long ride, we are not eating to refuel, we are eating to stay out of trouble. We need to eat between 100 and 125 calories per hour.

One of the biggest challenges at the HHH is the heat. Heat burns calories and eating that little bit of food, as we ride, can help our bodies manage core temperature.

Clothing: What dehydrates so many people at HHH (or long rides) is not wearing the right clothes, or at least not covering their skin. The more skin you show to the sun and wind, the faster you dehydrate. We need to wear a proper jersey that is light enough material and zipped up. The jersey will absorb your perspiration and slowly evaporate so that it cools you down. Unzipping the jersey allows the wind to dry up the moisture and reduces the cooling affect. Sun sleeves, a recent addition to my wardrobe, make a big difference for reducing the heat your body absorbs from the sunlight.

Riding a Moderate Pace: Conserve your resources by riding at a moderate and consistent pace. Be careful how you manage your physical resources. Your HHH ride should be an extension of your actual preparation and training. Starting off too quickly will use up too many resources early and leave you in trouble during the latter stages of the ride. Conserve your energy and stay moderate with your pace.

Warning Signs while Training: Watch out for these warning signs:

- 1) Feeling the heat? You are probably not eating enough calories. Remember to ingest 125 calories per hour during your 100 mile ride.
- 2) Are you urinating? If you are not going to the bathroom, you are probably under-hydrated
- 3) Do you need to recover at break points? You're probably riding at too high of a pace. Make sure you are staying at 70% to 80% of your maximum abilities during the ride.
- 4) Does your heart rate stay high when stopping? Eat, drink and SLOW DOWN!
- 5) If you think you need to stop and recover, you have either gone too far in your distance already, or your pace is too aggressive and you need to back off and go to a softer pace.

We prepare for HHH, so we know what we will be up against. We train in the heat, so that we get better at dealing with the heat. We practice our techniques of managing and moderating pace, so that we know how much our body can handle as outdoor temperatures rise. We practice eating and drinking while riding, so that we can learn how much our bodies need to have a good ride. We also prepare so that we can build our fitness while improving our cycling skills.

Now, let's get out there and beginning preparing for the ride of the year!