

APRIL training tip

Understanding active recovery!

So your training plan says easy 45-60min spin or easy 20-30min run or easy 1500m float to move the body and aid in recovery. These workouts will usually be done after a long weekend of training or 2-3 hard effort days.

Why include these workouts in your training and when is including them not beneficial? first it is important to understand the equation.....

STRESS + REST = PERFORMANCE

We all get how we stress the body, longer and harder efforts. But how do we rest the body.

If we look at various efforts I like to use zones in conjunction with perceived efforts to get a gauge of our efforts. Yes tools such as HR monitors can help with that - but ultimately when that HR monitor beeps what we choose to do about it may depend on what is the theme of your workout.

Zone 1 - Recovery - under a 5 out of 10 Perceived effort

Very low intensity. This zone should be used on days following a hard effort if you have a solid endurance base built. If not, you will be better off taking the day off completely until your aerobic base is improved. The benefit to working at this intensity is to increase blood flow to areas that have been stressed within the previous 24-48 hours. No breakdown in muscle tissue will occur at this intensity. Additionally, repair of muscle that was damaged is improved by increasing blood flow to help rid the damaged areas of waste metabolites, and bring in nutrient rich blood to speed the recovery process.

Zone 2 – Aerobic Endurance - a 5-7 out of 10

This is the intensity where the majority of endurance training should be done, and for the first 6-12 weeks where all of your training should take place - it allows you to focus on form and build a strong foundation - upwards of 75% of your training time, over the course of a year will take place at this effort. The intensity is easy and comfortable, one where you are able to carry on a conversation if exercising with company. Cellular adaptations are also the greatest at this intensity, making the body more capable of utilizing the oxygen it inspires and also more efficient at burning fat as a fuel. This is of great benefit, as our bodies have a virtually unlimited store of fat to use as energy as opposed to carbohydrate, which is limited and largely dependent on our current dietary status.

Zone 3 – Intensive Aerobic Endurance - race pace a 7.5-8 out of 10 -typically a very small window - this is what I like to call our default and the mushy middle

- you can "easily" train at this effort but you typically will not benefit from it. This intensity should only be used sparingly, during base periods for endurance athletes. It is a bit more stressful on the body, but provides virtually no added benefit to that of zone 2. This being the case, it will take a bit longer to recover from workouts at this intensity. Zone 3 is of benefit to aid the body in getting prepared for the heart rate intensities of zones 4 and 5, as more fast-twitch muscle fibers are recruited in zone 3. Carbohydrate is needed more to fuel exercise at this intensity, but physiological adaptation is minimal. This is typically where you will race at for 2+ hour events and therefore it is beneficial during your tempo/taper phase