
Fall & Winter Training

Coach Kelli and I have received emails from various coaches around the country regarding Frazier Cycling's year-round youth road cycling program. Last week I received an email from a coach in Pennsylvania who recently started a junior road team and wanted advice on how to maintain a year-round program during the colder, more inclement part of the year. He stated that the roadways are often unsafe due to wet and slick conditions beginning in the fall until after spring begins.

For the road off-season, mountain biking is often suggested for roadies who want to maintain their conditioning in the fall and winter months. This can work if there are trails nearby and the team members have the appropriate equipment. Cycle-cross is another alternative. For certain individuals or groups, these suggestions may work out, but our experience has led us to recommend indoor cycle training mixed with indoor strength and conditioning.

Throughout the road racing season, we are encouraged by organizers of mountain bike and cycle-cross events to involve our team. I've given it a lot of consideration. Sometimes choices are limited by economics. Cycling is an expensive sport – if it isn't obvious to some folks, ask the parents of your team members. Owning a mountain bike or cycle-cross bike is cost prohibitive for many of our team members, especially when you consider the amount of money our parents have spent on road cycling equipment and accessories such as a lightweight road bike, time trial bike, cycling shoes. Also, there are expenses for race fees, travel, tires, tubes, race kits, component replacements, etc. Sponsorships and team discounts help, but most parents are still acutely aware of what they are spending – and rightly so. The parents have invested a lot of bucks, so asking the parents to open their wallets for a whole new cycling sport is pushing the envelope. This is not to say that there won't be a few who are ready and willing, but the more members on your team, the more difficult it will be to include everyone in the change. Keeping the team together is an important objective.

I mentioned that alternative sports are often limited by economics, but there are other considerations. After a long road race season, we believe that our team members need a break – physically, but more importantly, mentally. Personally, I don't believe that the kids should race after the road season until the next road season. I've seen too many young cyclists burn-out and drop out of the sport before they reach their peak. Our mission is to grow our sport and to promote a lifestyle of fitness and exercise, so we want to keep our youths in cycling while avoiding burn out.

We recommend diversity in training that still includes the road bike – year round. We recommend a break from competition after the road race season. The "off-season" part of our program includes activities and exercises that promote long term development while keeping the team together. Keeping the team together is essential to maintaining a year round program.

Instead of mountain biking, cycle-cross, or cross country skiing, our off-season workouts include various short indoor cycle trainer workouts, strength and core conditioning, weight lifting for the older and seasoned youths, light running, and games like team shuttle relays. For indoor facilities, we use a local gym and a city park athletic building multiple times per week until we move all of our practices outdoors in the spring. We have found these facilities to be very reasonably priced. The expensive to the parents is minimized because the team members use their indoor trainers and regular bikes. Indeed, we receive a team discount from the local gym for cycling specific strength training.

Regarding training workouts, there are many resources. For example, we've picked up tips for our program for the off season from various coaches including those who have written past articles in this *Performance Cycling Conditioning* newsletter.
