

TO THE T

Very specific training is good ... sometimes

My clients will occasionally ask me how important precision is in training. “Does it matter if I do 70 minutes instead of 90, or six intervals instead of eight?” For most riders, following a training plan with reasonable accuracy is better than compulsively completing every detail down to the exact prescribed wattage and second.

The compulsively detailed approach can be a turn-off, especially if the complexity makes scheduling and execution difficult and the results aren’t much different than the JRA (Just Riding Around) training your peers do. There is no need to run stoplights in the name of sticking to your training plan.

That said, the more intense an effort is, the more important it is to stick to your prescribed plan. There are two reasons for this: mainly, to avoid over-training, but also to ensure the intended physiological trait is being trained. A few watts of power output one way or the other won’t make a difference over the course of a four-hour endurance ride. And a few watts will still be somewhat unimportant for a two-and-a-half-hour hard tempo ride. But those few watts could be the difference between completing and not completing a threshold workout, or especially a VO₂ max workout.

I prescribe less-structured workouts for lower-intensity efforts so athletes are not sick of structure when it comes time for higher-intensity workouts. This way, when it’s time for a relatively difficult six times five-minute VO₂ max workout, the rider is mentally fresh enough to follow rigorous details. This philosophy seems to work for most racers — myself included — but I have a few clients who seem to need structure for all their training rides, even recovery rides. Some people get a sense of confidence from doing things exactly in a certain way. If this works for you, go for it.

The important thing, regardless of your preferred manner of training, is to pay attention to your training load. How many hours did you train this week? Approximately how many total minutes of tempo did you do? How many minutes of hard climbing?

As a coach, I find power meters and software-analysis tools most helpful with riders who tend towards less structure. With the power download, we can see exactly what each ride really was, and categorize it appropriately. Of course, these tools are also good for highly structured riders to see if they are performing workouts correctly, but I find that to be less of an

issue than the “accounting” for unstructured training.

But again, the core idea is to track what training you’re doing on the weekly level, and how that fits into the training you’ve done earlier in the season and in years past. If we look at cycling-specific fitness as the culmination of months and years of consistent work, rather than just what you did last week, then we can view weekly workout structure as merely the best way to enable a certain amount of work to get accomplished within a certain time period.

Below are examples of how the same amount of weekly work can be accomplished in a structured and an unstructured method.

STRUCTURED PLAN

MON: Day off or 30-45 minutes power <200W. Core workout.

TUE: 8x5 minutes threshold (275-315W) with 1-minute recovery; 10-15 minutes each warm up and cool down.

WED: 40 minutes tempo (225-270W); 10-15 minutes each warm-up and cool-down.

THU: 8x5 minutes threshold (275-315W) with 1-minute

ROBERTO DI GIOVINE



Thor Hushovd

adiStar Ultra

adidas
adidas.com/cycling