



Roberto's Training Tips

By Roberto Piccinin, Technical Director for the Tour of Hope

First, I want to congratulate you! Deciding to register for the 2018 Tour of Hope and committing to train for the event is a huge step in accomplishing this great adventure! Now, if you want to be ready for the big day, it's important to stay focused and commit to your training program. Without further ado, here are my top-10 tips to help you prepare for this 650 km event!

1. Planning and Structure

Before diving head first into your cycling training, you need a short, medium and long-term plan. Most importantly, you need to take a structured approach to your training. Sporadic training will get you nowhere fast. Your efforts should pay off; but if you don't have a structured plan, your goals will be more difficult to achieve.

It's crucial to put together, on paper, a detailed plan, referencing specific dates and goals.



2. Monitor and manage intensity

The most important concept to keep in mind when cycling is managing your heart rate. Knowing your heart rate parameters is essential.

There are many different tables and calculation methods for training zones. Most of them are very similar, but the parameters may vary. At the end of the day, each method serves the same purpose: they allow you to determine your training zones so you can pace yourself and manage your efforts during training.

The most accurate method of determining how far you can push your cardio-pulmonary system is the VO₂max test. The results of this test, which is usually carried out in a sports lab, will give you a precise assessment of your cardio-pulmonary function—the most important being your maximum heart rate.

A VO₂max test will tell you how hard you can push yourself. Using the data collected, you can determine the exact parameters of your training zones. If you are unable to have this test done in a lab setting, there are a number of tables and formulas available which will allow you to approximate these zones. Karvonen, Sally Edwards, and Joe Friel are experts in heart rate training zones, and each has a different formula you can use.

3. Sample training zones

- ZONE (1) Rest: 50-60% of maximum heart rate
- ZONE (2) Recovery: 61%-70% of maximum heart rate
- ZONE (3) Aerobic Zone: 71%-80% of maximum heart rate
- ZONE (4) Anaerobic Zone: 81%-90% of maximum heart rate
- ZONE (5) Red Zone: 91%-100% of maximum heart rate



Once you've determined your heart rate parameters, you will be able to design a structured training program, with a focus on conserving energy in each zone yet maximizing your power output. A personal trainer can help with this. You can also watch videos on YouTube, where you'll find plenty of examples of training sessions for each training zone.

4. Frequency, Intensity and Duration

There are three key elements to keep in mind during your training:

- (1) Frequency. How many sessions will you commit to?
- (2) Intensity. How much effort do you want to put in?
- (3) Duration. How much time do you want to spend at it?

Your workload – the frequency, intensity or duration—must be proportionate to the goal you have set for your event.

By applying these three elements, you will reach what is referred to as your “aerobic threshold”. The more you train, the more tangible improvements to your power and endurance will become. Once you reach the point in your physical conditioning that allows you to take on more difficult rides, you can start to incorporate training sessions that are similar in distance and time to the event you are training for.



An increase of 10% per week, (a recognized standard), to your training program should be sufficient to achieve your desired results. During the basic preparation period (6 to 8 weeks), you should train in zone 3 and the duration should vary between 45 minutes and 2.5 hours. The intensity should be moderate and steady. Zone 3 training lets your body deliver oxygen to the muscle cells, increases the number of mitochondria (where aerobic metabolism happens), and increases the capillary density.

Zone 3 training also encourages weight loss.

5. Implementing your Strategic Training Plan

Draft your strategic plan on paper. Start from the date of your event and work backwards to draft an action plan. Essentially, you need to work in reverse.

Generally, you should plan for 6 to 8 weeks of basic conditioning at a lower intensity level before tackling the second part of your training plan.

It is important to keep a training journal to track your progress. Keep notes on the type, duration, and the intensity (zone) of your sessions. It is also important to take note of how you felt during each of them. This journal will be an invaluable reference tool for years of subsequent training. It will help you adjust and personalize your training approach, as well as rule out strategies that haven't worked well and reinforce those that yielded the best results.



6. Pace (RPM: Revolutions per minute) and Resistance (Torque)

The consensus in cycling literature is that the ideal target RPM lies between 85 and 90 RPM. At this RPM, the aerobic system and neuromuscular systems are equally engaged. As the RPM increases, so does the solicitation of the aerobic (cardiopulmonary) system occur.

This becomes an issue when you combine RPM and resistance. Resistance is determined by the mechanical system of your bike (the gears). You need to identify the gear that will save you the most effort while maximizing speed and power.

7. Hills

Once you have reached the 8-week mark, you should consider hill training.

There are two options. The first is short, abrupt hills, and the other long and steep inclines. Depending on the topography of your event route, you should choose the option that matches it most closely.

Hills are a great opportunity to refine your climbing technique, finding the right gear, to manage your breathing, balance your heart rate with desired speed, and increase your power. During a climb, pay particular attention to your body's position. Lean forward slightly and apply more direct pressure on the pedals to keep your speed up. Always try to keep your chest open by placing your hands on the brake hoods and pulling toward your body. Bend your body at the hip to stabilize your upper body. One 60-90 minute hill session per week will be sufficient to prepare you to tackle the challenges of your event.



8. Intervals

Intervals are an important part of your strategic training. You can incorporate them into your overall program, but only after you have built up endurance and power. There are several ways to integrate intervals.

Intervals can last anywhere from 15 to 30 seconds up to several minutes. Intervals should be completed in zones 4 and 5. It is crucial to follow the interval with a recovery period equal in duration to the length of the interval itself. For the purposes of training for your event, one session per week should be sufficient.

9. Tapering period

About two weeks before your event, start tapering your training program. You'll need to cut down the volume and intensity of your workouts. You'll need to reduce the length of your workouts also, but continue to do short 30 to 60 minutes "tempo" sessions. These "tempo" sessions should be moderately difficult. You can also incorporate short intervals to maintain your technique and cruising speed.

Finally, during these last two weeks, you should do one session that is more or less equal in terms of time and distance to your event. This will confirm that your conditioning is where it needs to be.

During this taper period, work on the mental aspect of your conditioning. Work on staying in a positive state of mind going into the event. Be positive about the fact that you have left nothing to chance when it comes to training. Try to visualize your route during the event, and tell yourself you will complete it because you have prepared for it well.



10. Dealing with negative mind chatter

Cycling is a mentally and physically demanding sport. There is always something to learn about managing things that you can't control, such as: weather conditions, rolling resistance, mechanical problems, and topographic challenges along the route, etc. Some of these factors can be dealt with expeditiously during an event.

You should perform a periodic 'systems' check' concerning the elements over which you have full control. Managing your food intake, hydration, breathing, heart rate, and your general physical well-being or the contrary, RPM and gearing, strategic positioning behind cyclists in front of you (for wind shelter), etc. All of these can be quickly addressed and corrected.

If you do not immediately correct the negative issues that are distracting you, you risk falling into a state of negativity, where everything seems to be falling into a black hole you can't escape from.

Hence, playing the 'negative mind chatter cassette' becomes repetitive, causing havoc and destroying the positive mental toughness needed to succeed in cycling. Worst of all, it can become a mind fixture that becomes difficult to tune out. This mental flexibility, toughness and focus keeps you 'in the moment', and allows you to overcome overwhelming and annoying sensations, such as pain and discomfort. Getting back to listening to the positive thinking mind chatter cassette may well carry you through to the finish line.

Giving up is always at the doorstep. But opting to listen to 'positive mind chatter' will take you much further and help you better manage the challenges that are part of cycling.



TIPS

How do I stay positive?

Your first priority should always be to manage your breathing. Panting or shallow breathing will only exacerbate your discomfort and distress. Breathe deeply from the diaphragm (navel breathing) rather than from your upper chest and concentrate on keeping it steady and rhythmic.

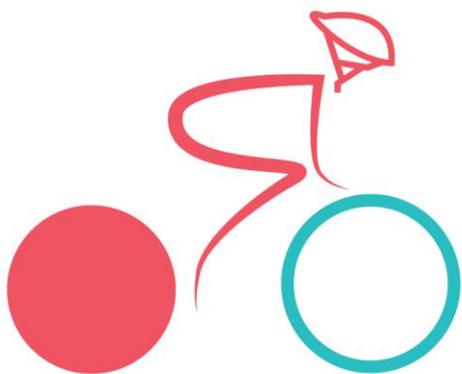
Second, don't over-dwell on your physical state. Remind yourself you are in control of the situation, that you can manage it, and that negativity is just a nasty passenger you can do without.

In moments of doubt, take a look around you and tell yourself other cyclists feel just as bad, if not worse, than you do.

Third, during your ride always look at the situation in context and in a broader perspective and above all 'stop the drama'. For example, where there is a long hill to tackle, keep in mind that an equally long descent awaits you.

If you fail to listen to your 'positive mind chatter cassette' you're putting yourself dangerously closer to the black hole of surrender. Ultimately, you also risk listening to it during subsequent events.

TOUR
DE L'ESPOIR
OF HOPE
26-29
JULY 2018



THANK YOU



1.800.862.6775

WWW.TOURESPOIR.COM