

Mongoose's Shaun Lewis knows a thing or two about hard training
Photo: John Fraser



Training for ultra-endurance MTB events Part III

In part two of the series we looked at the various work outs that could be used and programmed into a schedule to get the rider to the start line in the peak of physical condition for the minimum investment of time. This issue we are going to put it altogether and look at how those workouts should be structured into a 16 week training program.

WORDS BY MARK FENNER

We asked a few questions in the last issue. These were: how many of these sessions do we put into each week of training? When should we program a recovery week? What should we do if we have to miss a session? And what do we do if we are feeling unwell? Most training programs are based around the common terminology of base, build, peak and race phases. With the less is more type of program, where quality sessions are programmed right from the beginning, the base and build phase can be amalgamated into one 10 week block of training. This 10 week block can follow a 4 weeks on, 1 week off type of periodisation. Each week will get progressively harder, increasing the physiological load on the body, followed on week 5 by a recovery week, which allows the body to recover and over-compensate for the 4 preceding harder weeks. This style of periodisation was established by Dr Tudor Bompa but was, however, originally designed for weight training not aerobic endurance type training. Therefore, with the correct monitoring of training load (and the use of power meters), it is possible to create training blocks of between 3 - 6 weeks before structuring in a recovery week. For the purpose of this article we will follow a 4 week build 1 week recovery periodisation model.

After the 10 week base/build phase a 5 week specific peak and race phase can be added. This phase will focus specifically on the demands of the particular event due to be raced. Specificity of exercise is especially important during this phase. If the course to be ridden has a multitude of short pinch climbs, it is essential to replicate this during this phase to fine tune and specifically prepare the body for the target event. Likewise, if the event is on a flatter more rolling course the specific workouts should replicate this with longer intervals at or near to threshold.

The chart below shows this typical base/build and peak/race phase followed by a seven day taper for the target event.

MACRO	16 WEEK 24 HOUR TRAINING PLAN															
MESO	BASE AND BUILD PHASE										PEAK AND RACE PHASE					
MICRO	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16

Typical Base/Build Weeks 1 - 10

The chart below shows a typical base/build week, the principles of progressive overload will continue to be added according to the sessions outlined in article number two.

	MORNING	AFTERNOON / EVENING
MON	<i>Rest</i>	<i>Rest</i>
TUE	<i>Session 6 or 7</i>	<i>Rest</i>
WED	<i>Session 2 or 4</i>	<i>Rest</i>
THUR	<i>Session 3</i>	<i>Rest</i>
FRI	<i>Rest or Recovery Session 5</i>	<i>Rest</i>
SAT	<i>Session 6 or 7</i>	<i>Rest</i>
SUN	<i>Session 1</i>	<i>Rest</i>

	MORNING	AFTERNOON / EVENING
MON	<i>Rest</i>	<i>Rest</i>
TUE	<i>Session 6 or 7</i>	<i>Rest</i>
WED	<i>Session 2 or 4</i>	<i>Rest</i>
THUR	<i>Session 3</i>	<i>Rest</i>
FRI	<i>Rest or Recovery Session 5</i>	<i>Rest</i>
SAT	<i>Session 2 or 4</i>	<i>Rest</i>
SUN	<i>Session 1</i>	<i>Rest</i>

Typical Peak/Race Weeks 11 - 15

The chart below shows a typical peak/race phase week.

	MORNING	AFTERNOON/EVENING
MON	<i>Rest</i>	<i>Rest</i>
TUE	<i>Session 6 or 7</i>	<i>Rest</i>
WED	<i>Session 5</i>	<i>Rest</i>
THUR	<i>Session 6 or 7</i>	<i>Rest</i>
FRI	<i>Session 5</i>	<i>Rest</i>
SAT	<i>Pre-Race tune up</i>	<i>Rest</i>
SUN	<i>XC or Enduro Race</i>	<i>Rest</i>

During this phase the VO2 sessions should have been increased up to a max time of 30 - 40 minutes in the heart rate zone outlined in article 2 for VO2 workouts. These sessions require a great deal of motivation to complete, however they will increase the ceiling of your aerobic capacity and therefore any percentage of that maximal aerobic power that you will work at during a 24 hour event. Recovery from these sessions is very important therefore there are more recovery sessions included in the program during this phase. It is also a good idea during this peak/race phase to include some racing. Racing is the very best training there is as you will always put in just that little bit more effort during a race. It also allows feeding plans and other important race strategies to be trialed before the big event where mistakes have a greater impact. Using races as training for the big one also hits our specificity of exercise rationale directly, especially if the courses are similar to our target race.

I would recommend completing your last enduro of up to 8 hours no closer than 2 weeks before the big event. This will allow for adequate recovery, however you could compete in a XC race of up to 2 hours one week before as your final hard specific effort. The pre-race tune up is just like session 5 but with 3 x 3 minute with 5 minute recovery between efforts at race pace to get you body ready for the race on the following day. This session is vital to a good race and is often neglected.

Typical Taper Week 16

The chart below outlines a standardized 7 day taper

	MORNING	AFTERNOON/EVENING
SAT	<i>Pre-Race tune up</i>	<i>Rest</i>
SUN	<i>XC Race</i>	<i>Rest</i>
MON	<i>Rest</i>	<i>Rest</i>
TUE	<i>Session 5</i>	<i>Rest</i>
WED	<i>Session 5</i>	<i>Rest</i>
THUR	<i>Rest</i>	<i>Rest</i>
FRI	<i>Pre-Race tune up</i>	<i>Rest</i>
SAT	<i>Rest</i>	<i>Target 24 Hour Race</i>
SUN	<i>Target 24 Hour Race</i>	<i>Put Your Feet Up And Relax ;o)</i>

The main objective of the Taper is to bring the rider into their key event fresh and ready to go. All the residual fatigue should be gone and you should feel ready to rip the cranks off the bike.

The above program would be suitable for a rider who has competed in 4 man team 24 hr events for fun who has completed a 12 hour race solo and who has ambition to take their riding up to the next level and compete in a solo 24 hr event with the aim of riding solidly for 24 hrs. The basic principles of this program, however, can be altered to suit almost any level of rider with alterations made to the duration and quantity of the sessions provided in article number two. There are so many variables to consider and look for regarding training optimisation that I could fill the pages of Enduro Mag for the next couple of years.

So what happens if we are feeling ill or we are too tired to complete a session? Simple, just move forward a recovery week, have a rest and then resume the program. The body is pretty good at telling us when we need to rest, so it is very important to listen to it and read the signs. Things like sleep disturbance, increased or decreased appetite, the feeling of stress and becoming snappy with your family and friends are all tell-tale signs that you may be slightly over-reaching and in need of a rest.

Ok, so by now you should have all the sessions and planning you need to start looking at the race calendar and thinking ahead. Start thinking about what event you want to race and work out how to apply the program and get too it.

Good luck and if you see me on the trail during a 24 hour race please don't come charging by!!!

Cheers
Mark Fenner
www.ftptraining.com

