

## **Not had a PB in Years?... Are You Missing a Trick?**

Endurance athlete's (runners, cyclists, swimmers) or Triathletes? Amateur or budding professional? I am a sports scientist and have discovered something very exciting you need to know, I have been working in with Ironman competitors and Triathletes for over 10 years and let me tell you, you may be missing a trick ...or even two.

By fixing these two parts of your programme you could get that winning feeling again this season (or at least get a few PB's!). In this article I will share the two most effective and important changes I have made to many of my clients programmes over the last 10 years. I use these strategies to help get real results for real people like you, not only the professionals.

**“We do more of the stuff we like and less of the stuff we don't like as life goes on.”** Wouldn't you agree? This statement is very true for the majority of us, myself included. If you are an endurance based athlete who has always trained regular and wants to see a personal best or get back to winning ways – you may need to reverse this statement – basically - doing more of the stuff you don't like.

I currently work with GB age group athletes, marathon runners, cyclists and swimmers, long and short distances and apart from being a bit “special” there are two things lots of you have in common. You are avoiding the tough stuff and doing too much of the easy stuff! And your nutrition is ....mmmm.....SHOCKING! What do I mean?

If you are like some of my clients were when we met you may not be working at a high enough intensity and are doing too many hours at, near or below your race pace heart rate. Combined with the fact you are running on empty, meaning you have been on a - low calorie - high carbohydrate - diet causing an excessive “calorific deficit” sometimes putting the body into starvation mode.

Your ultimate aim is obviously improvement. That's not complicated, that's why you train your ass off. So how come you have not PB'd in years? There are two common things in my opinion, over training/unbalanced programme (of low – moderate intensity) combined with under eating.

### **What to Do...**

I would love it if everyone could get their fitness tested professionally (with us of course!), but I am realistic. The next best option is a DIY fitness test -12 minute run(as far as you can go), as many press ups and sit ups in a minute, squats in a minute and Burpees in a minute as you can manage. Then train for 12-16 weeks, using your new strategies and re-test.

Combine this fitness test with an energy balance calculation (we also offer this service but lots of DIY sites available on-line for free) to see if what you are eating is near enough (within 300kcal) balanced with what you are burning off. Depending on the results of your findings in these two tests you may need to make some changes in either your training plan or your eating plan or (likely) – BOTH!

### **Improving Your Fitness – The easy way!**

Performance in many endurance sports relates directly to your fitness level. The measure of how fit you are is called your aerobic capacity or VO2Max. After many years of training, and no PB's, its likely that you have seen most of the easy to reach improvements in your fitness (Vo2 Max). Your Vo2 Max will now only improve with high intensity training. That's why you have been doing intervals right? Right, partly.

Training at intensities above 90% VO2max is one of the most potent routes to fitness improvements.

If you are already doing interval running, cycling or swimming, well done - join the club, what you need to do now is **High Intensity Strength Training** aka – circuit training. This combines the aerobic interval work (you may be already doing) and the muscle strength endurance work. This is commonly the most overlooked component of the amateur endurance programme. It's meant to be in there but it often left out in favour of more steady state stuff.

A typical circuit training workout will include exercises that improve your running and cycling strength, foot speed, core stability, lactate acid tolerance, VO2 max, running economy and shoulder endurance, all in one highly efficient workout.

## **Solutions and Options**

### **Boot Camp Circuit**

6.30am-7.30am Mondays & Wednesdays – Treboeth, playfootball  
7.00am-8.00am Tuesdays & Thursdays – Bishopston  
£5 per session

### **Injury Prevention and Core Stability Circuit**

Saturdays at 1.30pm – Treboeth, playfootball  
£5 per session

**DIY Circuit Training**– make up your own circuit and do it at home or integrate some muscle endurance exercises to your next interval session on the bike, road or pool – press ups, squats, vertical jumps and lunges to name just a few.

**Circuit Training or Exercise Classes**– Various times, various locations in and around Swansea. Boxercise, body pump, muscle max to name a few.

**Remember** your system needs to be fuelled well when you are an endurance athlete or anyone who expects their body to perform. If you do not fuel your system well you will struggle training in the “red zone”, just feeling ill if you are lucky, picking up injuries if you are unlucky.

**\*Please note\*** this type of training is not for people who want to be in their comfort zone, it hurts, it makes you feel a bit sick (that's the lactic acid ... gotta learn to love it!). It is higher risk too. You need to be in good physical condition – mobility, flexibility and core stability to lessen the risk.

It will however boost your overall fitness like crazy (VO2 Max) and ultimately your performance in endurance events. Once or twice a week for 12 weeks would be enough to notice a difference.

If you follow these two simple steps and cut out the poor mileage and fuel your system for the training. You will take a huge step towards improving your performance in cycling, swimming, running or all three. Trust me I'm a sports scientist!

If you have any questions please drop me a line or leave your comments below.

Thanks for reading, until next time.

Richard

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