

THE CORRECT BIKE FIT SETUP

Last Sunday, I helped instruct the BRP (USAC Beginner Racer Program) which was held at the Dominguez Hills CBR (California Bicycle Racing) crit. We were fortunate enough to have one of the local pros, Brian McCulloch from the [Elevate KHS Pro Cycling Team](#) assist us in helping teach these new racers how to race and stay safe during the race. Brian is the “real-deal”.

For those that don't know about BRP, it's a USAC program to provide survival skills to the new racers. An overview of BRP is here ... https://www.usacycling.org/get-involved/support-role/coaches/beginning-racer-program#sectionTitleWidget_2781

BRP is divided into 5 separate clinics and works best if the race is a series. Topics covered are

1. Basic Pack Skills — Protecting Your Front Wheel
2. Cornering — Choosing and Holding Your Line
3. Pack Awareness and Skills
4. Sprinting Basics
5. Bringing it All Together

Each clinic is comprised of three components: on-bike instructional clinic, mentored race, and race debrief.

So, not only does the beginner racer get great how-to, but, can also get 2 points each clinic instead of the usual 1 point that goes towards their minimum 10 points required to upgrade from cat 5 to cat 4.

In this session, we discussed #5-Bringing It All Together.

One of the items we discuss each and every BRP is to race in the drops, not on the hoods. There are several important reasons for this. Each time we teach these clinics, we are continuously telling the attendees to “get into the drops.” Over and over and over again, they keep putting their hands back up onto the hoods, where we say again and again, “get in the drops.”

I asked Brian why so many racers (all categories) race on the hoods instead of the drops. Brian said (a) that he spends 85%-90% of his time training and racing in the drops and that (b) the main reason that it is difficult for cyclists of all categories to ride in the drops is because they have been [bike] fitted to ride on the hoods.

I thought about this for a second and this makes sense. See, you learn something every day.

So, during your next bike fit, make sure to tell the fitter to fit you on the drops and not on the hoods.

FTP TEST: LESSONS LEARNED

What is Functional Threshold Power? For a short, but detailed article, [click this link](#). The short definition is “The average maximum power you can produce for 1-hour.” But, since a flat, no cars, no stop lights/stop signs, etc. 1-hour course is difficult to find, there is also a 20-minute test (see photo above) that can get you pretty close.

I’ve been doing an FTP test once a month to see improvements. I’ve also been adding in a lot of VO2 max workouts as well as sub-threshold workouts. Last year, my FTP was 310, this year, 375. Part of it is due to the specific training, the rest is getting used to and knowing how to take the test.

Totals		Averages		Maximums	
Duration:	20:17	Speed (mph):	23.1	Speed (mph):	23.7
Time Moving:	20:17	Power (watts):	375	Power (watts):	414
Distance (miles):	7.794	Cadence (rpm):	82	Cadence (rpm):	117
Work (kJ):	456	Athlete Weight (lbs):	185.00	W' Expended (%):	139
W' Work (kJ):	91				
Elevation Gain (feet):	0				

Last year, I took several FTP tests on the trainer, but mostly on the road.

FTP TEST Lessons Learned

#1 – It’s more difficult to take an FTP test on the road than on a trainer. On the road, you need to contend with cars, undulations in the road, head-wind, side-wind, tail-wind (usually never ☺), and many other distractions. On a trainer, you can put some headphones on and, while listening to your favorite music, you power-up to your target and keep it at a steady state.

#2 – Last year, I spent a lot of training miles increasing my cadence, so much so, that on most rides, I am averaging 102-105rpm for a full 2-hours. Also, last year, I did each FTP test at a higher cadence. This year, for this latest FTP test, I tried to keep cadence at 80rpm. So, what changed? Referencing the Power Formula $P=F*V$ (where P=Power in Watts, F=Force on Pedals, V=Velocity aka Cadence), in order to maintain a given power,

- if you push lighter on the pedals, you will need to increase the cadence
 - this stresses your cardiovascular system
- if you push harder on the pedals, you will need to decrease the cadence
 - this stresses your neuromuscular system

The metabolic cost for increased cadence is a higher heart rate and heavier breathing. Since, as we get older, our max heart rate decreases from year to year, so, for this year, I decided to tax the neuromuscular system vs the cardiovascular system as I did last year. For me, right away, I could feel the difference. Once I spun up the trainer and fired up the power meter, it felt a lot easier pushing a bigger gear at a lower cadence.

#3 – It is best to divide the 20 minutes into 4 x 5-minute increments. For each 5 minutes, hold the power steady, then re-evaluate how you feel at the end of 5, 10 and 15 minutes. You can readjust your effort at each 5-minute increment.

For me, the above-mentioned lessons learned will give you the best chance of getting the best FTP numbers without having to redo the test.

Most clients I coach will end up doing the test a minimum of 3 times to get their actual number. For their first attempt, they usually go out too hard and blow up at the 10-minute mark. For their second attempt, they usually end up going too easy and have a lot of energy left at the end of 20 minutes. For their 3rd attempt, they usually get it right.

Knowing your FTP is the first step to training with power



LATEST BIKE FIT REQUESTS

Do you do remote fits?

Do you do mobile bike fits?

And, here are some commonly asked questions

- 1) Why do my knees hurt?
- 2) Why does my lower back hurt?
- 3) Why do my shoulders and arms hurt?
- 4) Why do my knees go out?
- 5) Are my legs the same length?
- 6) Why do I need new insoles?
- 7) What is a good insole?
- 8) Why do my toes go numb?
- 9) Why do my feet pads (metatarsals) go numb?
- 10) Why do I go numb down there?
- 11) How do I find a good bike fitter?
- 12) What is a good cycling shoe?
- 13) What is the difference between different pedals?