



Power Training. Powerful Results!
PEAKS COACHING GROUP

Name of Article: A Three Legged Stool

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Over the years of racing and coaching, I have concluded that the best athletes have mastered three essential areas in their life and in their training. By mastering these three areas, this allows them to see the opportunities for achieving success. These three areas are just like legs on a stool at your kitchen bar, they have 3 legs and are stable only because all the legs of the stool are of equal length and angle.

The first leg of the athletes' stool that you must train and master in order to be successful is the purely physical training. You must do the work. You have to get out there on a day-to-day basis and put in the miles. There is no substitute for this; you HAVE to put in your time on the bike. As they call us in Europe, we are members of the "road chain gang". This is the first step of achieving success in cycling, because if you do not master this leg, than you needn't worry about the other two. Each leg has many facets to it and the physical leg is no exception. You need to develop a solid year-long plan to your training and you need to work your plan. Once you identify your goals, you need to identify your weaknesses and strengths and then get to work ! We always love to train our strengths and hate working on the things that challenge us. Have you noticed how your sprinter friends always want to go out and do sprints? Have you noticed how your "skinny as toothpick mountain goat" friends are always inviting you on a trip to the mountains, so they can do "fun" repeats on the 10 mile climb that they so love? What about those power riders that only want to go as hard as they can on the flats? It is easy to train your strengths because you already excel in them. This allows you to "feel good" about your workout when you focus on an area that you are already good in. In reality though, if you really want to excel as a cyclist, you need to be able to do all the different areas that compose cycling well. You will need to practice your sprints, hills, power efforts, jumps, speed change, etc. Most importantly, you will need to really work on the things that you do not enjoy or do not really excel in. So, it is very easy to define your weaknesses, but it is tougher to get out there and do the work to improve them.

Once, I was coaching an athlete that had very specific strengths and had some very large holes in his abilities. After the initial testing of his abilities and coaching him for a month, I could tell that unless he really put forth an effort in improving his weaknesses, there were really only two races the entire season that he even had a shot at in winning. His particular strengths made him perfect to win these two races that always finished on a slight uphill into the wind and there was a hard right turn onto the finishing straight about 250m before the finish line. His strengths would make it perfect for him to win these races, as the sprint was short, and the finish required some power, but not too much and you had to have an ability to climb, but not too steep to let the pure mountain goats take over. It was disturbing to see a talented athlete that could have easily been able to win lots of races for a long time, have wasted so much valuable energy and efforts in his previous years of racing. It was only through a specific and determined training plan and a lot of sacrifice and hard work on his part, that I got him to fill in the gaps of his weaknesses which

allowed him to be a potential winner in more than just two races a year. The lesson here is that if you do not identify and be honest with yourself about your weaknesses and strengths, than you will not be able to achieve your ultimate potential.

The second leg of the stool is the mental training. You have to do the mental training that will MAKE you BELIEVE that YOU ARE A SUCCESS. One of my teammates was always getting second in the race. He would make the break, be a force in the break, and make the splits in the end only to always take second at the finish line . After blocking for him and the team working our tails off so he would stay away, we would always ask him what happened, why didn't you win? He would always say the same thing, "I didn't deserve to." Here he was, a pro bike racer, one of the best in the country at the time, he would be the one that started the break, he would probably be one of the motors in the break AND he would probably have been out there for 80miles and then he would say, he didn't "deserve" it. Now, go back and read the second sentence in this paragraph again. It has two important points in it: the words "Make Believe", and "Believe you are a success". First off, one of the most important points in mental training is that you visualize yourself having already succeeded in your goal. You "see" yourself reading your name at the top of the results sheet, you "see" yourself picking up your prize for 1st place, you feel the feelings of congratulations that your peers, family, friends are giving you for a job well done, you feel the elation of completing your goal. So, you are doing something that we all used to do when we were kids. We are playing, "Make Believe". There is power in that. Your brain does not know the difference between a vividly imagined event and a real event. The key is that you have to "FEEL" the sensations as they would "FEEL" when the real event occurs and you have to "see" the after effects of your accomplishment. What happens after you complete the event is just as important and seeing yourself throw your arms in the air crossing the finish line.

Second point and this is what my teammate did not do. He did not believe he was a success. I am willing to bet that somewhere in his childhood, he was told that he did not deserve to be a success, therefore it was against his "programming" to succeed. Can you imagine not deserving to be successful? Hmmm...Can you imagine not "deserving" to have a dessert, because you did not clean your plate at dinner? Hmmm.... Hit home anyone?

You have to "Believe" that you are success, and once you cultivate that belief, once you "pretend", "make believe" that you are a success, then the belief will come. Only when you have the belief that you can successfully complete a century ride, will you actually be able to do it. Once you have the belief that you can successfully win the local Criterium, will you actually be able to do it. The belief comes first, the success follows, then that brings about more confidence and a stronger belief which builds more success. It's an UPward spiral of success.

The Third Leg of your training stool is the nutritional side. This is also super important and makes a difference. You have to build your body from solid, good, clean, strong building blocks. If you build a body from Twinkies and Diet Soft Drinks, than you are handicapping yourself from the start line. I know some people, that only drink Diet Soft Drinks, and never pure, clean water. Their fundamental building block of their entire body is from a toxin! They are building a polluted body from the very foundation. It's no wonder that people get, "mysterious" diseases and ailments...maybe a diet drink every once in a while won't hurt you, but if that's all you drink, you are eventually going to feel the effects of a weak leg in your training stool. What you eat –TODAY-

will impact you six months from now. That nose that you have on your face, right NOW, was not there six months ago. What? You say? Yes, it's a true statement, the cells that comprise your nose are new cells and you have completely re-built your nose since the nose you had six months ago. What is really amazing is that you choose to re-build your body in exactly the same form as it has been before... contemplate that one! Your body is in a constant state of re-building, you are building new muscle cells, new bone cells, new brain cells, etc. So, if you eat smart for six months and feed your body good foods, pure water, high quality vitamins, then and only then will you have a pure, strong and clean body.

Sure, you say, what about all those guys that eat junk and still kick my butt on the Saturday ride? Well, eventually it will catch up with them, maybe not in the next few rides or even seasons, but eventually garbage in equals garbage out.

So, there you have it, the three legs of the athletes stool. Each is important in it's own way and there are many facets to each one. In future columns, I will expand on each. If you take a look at each leg, and really start to work on improving a few things in each, then you will see a difference quickly. Make sure that you are training correctly for you. This means taking all of the aspects that make up you as a person and as an athlete and working on the correct items that will improve your overall efforts.

I highly recommend that you start by learning as much as you can about each through reading books, talking with others, and learning from your mistakes. A good coach is helpful too, as this person as been down the road already and knows how to develop all areas of your training in order to help you achieve a peak performance. Ultimately, though, it you who has to do the work. One of my favorite quotes was by the famous Tour de France Winner, Fausto Coppi. When asked what the three most important tips he could give to someone wanting to improve in cycling, his reply was, "Ride the bike, Ride the bike, Ride the bike !" Make it a great training ride !



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