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PEAKS COACHING GROUP

Name of Article: The Peaks and Valleys of the Spring Racing Season

Author: Jeb Stewart MS

This time of the year for us Floridians is often a challenging one. We live in one of the only areas of the country where one can train year round. While on one hand this is advantageous, on the other it can often work against us, leading to burnout. Fortunately, we are about to wrap up the spring racing season and head into a much-needed break for the summer when we can rest and tune up our fitness.

But what about those who are already experiencing lack of motivation or decreased performance, or those who are headed for it and do not even realize it? Too many times when we start to come down from a peak in performance or miss a peak entirely we fall for the mistaken idea that we need to try harder, or “push through it”. Instead of taking time off, or planning our training to reflect the need that we have developed for reduced intensity or duration, we instead step it up by doing longer rides, adding mid-week crits to the schedule, or doubling up on races.

Unfortunately, this inevitably backfires on us, pushing us further into performance decrement and often times a depressed and unmotivated state where we do not even want to ride. This is when it pays dividends to have a coach to help us see these roadblocks coming before we ever get to them. Many experienced riders will be aware of these things and avoid them. Knowing your body pays off handsomely in times like these. But for the rest of us, who usually learn through experience, we are left to our own devices.

This is when it pays to be counterintuitive, which only a coach or seasoned rider is often able to do. What is called for in this situation is a training plan review and revision. Rest and recovery is what is needed, often meaning, yes, I will dare to say it, time off the bike. More easy rides should be done and frequency and intensity should be applied with good judgment. The idea is to allow the body to build back up its much needed energy stores to avoid or recover from a state of overreaching and renew vitality and enthusiasm for doing the very thing we love.

It is great to see someone recover their form after pushing too hard for a while. It is even better to not go down this road at all, to know yourself well enough through experience or to have the aid of an experienced coach to help you reach good form and maintain it through the times you need it most.

Living in the land of the eternal heat wave is a blessing and a curse. Being able to ride all year round affords us the chance to have good fitness earlier than most but can also help us lose it quicker. With a proper plan and some objective analysis, hopefully we can all start to enjoy healthier and more fulfilling seasons filled with more peaks than valleys and more good times on the bike. Until next time, train hard, rest harder, and ride smart!

*Jeb Stewart has a Master's degree in Exercise Science, is a Certified Strength & Conditioning and Performance Enhancement Specialist, a USA Cycling Expert Level Coach and co-owner of The Peaks Coaching Group.

 <p>PEAKS COACHING GROUP</p> <p>HUNTER ALLEN</p> <p>Power Training. Powerful Results!</p>	<p>Contact Us: www.peakscoaching.com info@peascoachinggroup.com Address: 414 Jackson St. Bedford, VA 24523 Phone: 540-587-9025 fax: 540-586-5715</p>
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