



# Power Training. Powerful Results! **PEAKS COACHING GROUP**

**Name of Article:** The Purpose of Warm Ups

**Author:** Jeb Stewart MS, CSCS, PES, Coach

## **Off the Front or Off the Back? Warm-Ups Can Make or Break Your Racing**

We work hard in the off-season, go to bed early and get up even earlier on weekends and weekdays alike. We even sacrifice our social lives in order to achieve levels of fitness we thought never possible. We train relentlessly, foregoing many of the pleasures our more “sane” friends enjoy. We go to great lengths to enjoy our personal obsession with our sport, and yet after all of that work, when we start to achieve a peak of fitness just in the nick of time, we often start to forgo many of the simple things that got us here to begin with. Warm-ups are often the first to go, and unfortunately for those who do not know any better, are often the practice that can make or break your performance in an event.

Whether it is a criterium, a road race, or a time trial, the demands of your event will require specific energy systems to be ready to act when called upon during your race. Each event will require different contributions from different energy systems. If these energy systems are not activated and the clearance process initiated during your warm up, when they are called upon in your race, they will not be ready to act and your performance will suffer along with you in the process. Shorter events often require a longer, more thorough routine, as the intensity is usually much higher and instantaneous. Longer events, conversely, often require a shorter, but no less thorough warm-up.

Too many people, whether in a show of bravado or ignorance, blow off their warm-up thinking that they will be able to warm into the race. If you are a Cat 1 with 15 years of racing in your legs, or a genetic phenomenon doing a local training race where the level of racing is beneath you, then this may be true. But if you are participating in a high-intensity event that matches your level of fitness and ability, then you had better be ready if you want to participate at any level, never the less excel.

Many also worry that they are going to blow up and not have anything left for the race if they go too hard in their warm-up. The level of work that you need and/or can tolerate is something that you can only find out in training, and we have seen far more instances of people being under rather than over warmed up. As you train more, you will find that you are able to go harder later in your rides after doing your initial efforts, which prime your energy systems and activate the clearance process. This often comes as a surprise to those new to endurance training but is a fact that cannot be denied. As you gain in fitness, you will find that it takes more time on the bike and more efforts to get a thorough warm-up and that you will not burn all your matches with a thorough routine.

This being said, it is also important to remember to drink during your warm-up so you do not enter your event in a state of dehydration. If calories are a concern, then be sure to drink a sports beverage containing electrolytes and carbohydrates during your effort. It is also highly suggested that you give yourself enough time to go to the bathroom, and take in a shot of gel so you do not enter your race hungry and depleted.

If you have several events in a weekend, or in a day, you still need to warm-up again, contrary to popular thought. That being said, because your legs will be primed and more “open” from the previous efforts, you will not have to put in as many efforts or for as long. You will still want to stimulate these energy systems, but not overuse them, as caloric conservation and hydration is a concern at this point.

Additionally, many are observed performing static stretching prior to their event. As coaches, it always warms our hearts to see any athlete stretching, as it is often extremely difficult to get them to practice this lost art that is so beneficial when applied appropriately. However, according to Clark & Russell, static stretching has actually been shown to reduce the neuromuscular efficiency of the muscles being stretched thus slowing muscle speed, reaction time, and firing rate. If you are going to do any stretching at all, perform some dynamic flexibility exercises taking the limbs throughout an active range of motion to warm the muscles but not slow them down. Static stretching should be done after easy rides to increase flexibility, and does not serve as a part of a thorough sports specific warm up routine when preparing for a race effort. Use dynamic stretching if you are going to stretch at all before your race. (For more information on scientific flexibility training visit the National Academy of Sports Medicine at [www.nasm.org](http://www.nasm.org))

Just as there are many types of events, there are many warm-up routines to match the demands found in them. Some races go off 100% from the gun, like a criterium or a time trial, just as others such as a century ride will require different contributions from the energy systems such as the aerobic, lactic acid, Vo2, and anaerobic systems. If you are already using a warm-up that works, then stick with it. If you have a coach, then you have probably already been given suggestions regarding your warm-ups for your races. Regardless of your situation, we have listed several warm-up routines for several popular events. Feel free to use, rearrange and share these with those who need them, and we guarantee your performance will improve as a result.

### **criteriums**

Crits go out from the gun, and getting in the proper warm up can be the difference between coming in first and being off the back in the first lap. Here is our suggestion for a criterium warm-up:

20 min easy, endurance paced warm up spin in the small ring

10 min at tempo pace in the big ring building to LT in the final minute

2-3 min easy spin

2-5 min at LT pace

3-5 min easy

1-2 min Vo2-AC pace

3-5 min easy

30 sec fast pedaling effort

2-5 min easy

### **Time Trials**

Time trials are very specific events and require equally specific warm-ups. You have to go so hard from the start, (But not too hard! If you overdo your start, you will be blown 10 minutes into the race!), and if you have not purged the system, then you are going to suffer immensely and so will your performance. This example ought to get you primed and ready to go at the next district TT.

20 min easy, endurance paced warm up spin in the small ring

10 min at tempo pace in the big ring building to LT in the final minute

3-5 min easy spin

5 min at LT pace

5 min easy

1 min at Vo2 pace with a high cadence

3-5 min easy

### **Road Races**

Road races are longer events, and typically do not go out as hard as crits or time trials. However, do not be lulled into a false sense of complacency and end up off the back on the first surge or climb. Get in a shorter but equally as thorough warm up, and be ready if the break goes on the first lap. Try this one on for size...

20 min easy, endurance paced warm up spin in the small ring

3-5 min at tempo pace

2 min easy

1-2 x 1 min hard efforts at or above LT pace

3-5 min easy between efforts

2-3 x 8 sec jumps (mini sprints)

5 min easy

- Be sure to give your self enough time to complete your warm up, stop by the rest room, take a shot of gel or sports drink, and get to the line sweating, in the big ring and ready to kick major butt!
- Remember, every individual is different, and although these routines apply the principles of exercise physiology common to us all, you may need to augment these routines a bit to best fit your level of fitness and the specific event you are training for.

Clark, Michael A., Russell, Allen M. Optimum performance training for the performance enhancement specialist. National Academy of Sports Medicine OPT; 2002: 266.

For more information on subjects related to endurance training or for any of your coaching and training needs check out Jeb and the rest of the coaches from the Peaks Coaching Group at [www.peakscoachinggroup.com](http://www.peakscoachinggroup.com).

\*Jeb Stewart is a USA Cycling Expert Level Coach and has a Master's degree in Exercise Science and Health Promotion. He is certified by the ACSM, The NSCA, the NASM and is a head coach and a partner at the Peaks Coaching Group. He has a long history of competing in a variety of athletic endeavors at the national level and currently races on the road around the country annually. He specializes in coaching athletes of all walks of life using a holistic approach and is on the forefront of coaching cyclists with power. Jeb's passion for helping people go to the next level in all of their endeavors has led him to become a national presenter, writer, and consultant on anything related to training, performance, and wellness.



Contact Us:

[www.peakscoaching.com](http://www.peakscoaching.com)

[info@peascoachinggroup.com](mailto:info@peascoachinggroup.com)

Address: 414 Jackson St. Bedford, VA 24523

Phone: 540-587-9025 fax: 540-586-5715