

## **16) CLIMBING FOR CYCLING**

### **CLIMBING ELEMENT 1:**

#### **Focus On Developing Your Muscular Endurance (ME)**

If there is one key ingredient to becoming a better climber it is your ability to maintain increasingly higher levels of power output for extended durations otherwise known as Muscular Endurance (ME).

The ability to maintain increasingly higher levels of power without passing too far into your lactate threshold takes practice and discipline and in my eyes is one of the most underused forms of training. Why? Because it's really \*#\$@# hard that's why.

Holding a steady pace of 400+ watts for 3 minutes or more can take a tremendous amount of self-discipline, physical ability, and most importantly muscular endurance and thus must be practiced repeatedly so that when we're climbing for performance we have a reserve of muscular endurance left to draw from.

Let's face it, climbing is something that any good cyclist worth his/her salt strives to improve. It's the pinnacle form of satisfaction to climb with greater confidence and fluidity. To do this you must be able to maintain a rhythmic cadence and have our muscles under constant duress without fatiguing. You must be able to control your effort and judge your abilities as you're climbing if you are to reach the top without losing steam.

You must master various levels of your Muscular Endurance! How can you develop this key ingredient for improved climbing? Let's briefly discuss two tactics both on-the-bike and off-the-bike that you can use to increase your muscular endurance.

**1. ME Intervals on your indoor trainer or out on your bike with various levels of gradients on hills.** The basic premise with ME Intervals is simple - repeatability! Climbing a hill or mountain once doesn't. In fact, to truly increase muscular endurance we must master various levels of hills for various lengths of time to improve performance. How many times do you think Lance practiced going up Alp Du'ez? I like intervals that range from 3 minutes at higher watts to as long as 15 minutes at moderate high watts. The key is to keep your cadence consistent (I prefer 80+ RPM - more on cadence

in element 5) and stay at or just below your lactate threshold (LT) / anaerobic threshold (AT) so that you can last the whole set.

Out on the bike my favorite ME repeats are done on a road with two different style climbs that I repeat 4-10 times each depending on my goals and training objectives. The first is short and steep and when performed well I can complete in about 90 seconds with a lower, more powerful gearing and spin at 65-80 RPM.

The other is longer and more gradual, but still really tough and takes me about 15 minutes to complete. I use lighter gearing and spin high (85+ RPM). I use these two style hills to generate two different forms of ME. One is shorter and more explosive and the other is longer and more controlling. My objective is still the same however, control my cadence, and maintain my HR just at or below my AT.

Over time I will choose 1-3 intervals to focus on increasing cadence or lower the gearing to produce higher watts and help to condition my body to maintain higher levels of power output while maintaining my heart rate and exertion level, thus improving my ME.

During these specific intervals I will also try to keep my HR 4-10 beats **above** my lactate threshold to condition my body and hopefully create a new level of sustained muscular endurance at my AT.

## **2. One of my other tactics to increase your ME is to utilize Power Yoga.**

Out of all the various forms of training I use and teach to others, nothing is more challenging than Power Yoga. Don't let the pony tails and hairy chests mislead you, Power Yoga will challenge you more than your average Alp, I promise you that. In relation to improving ME, Power Yoga is perfect because it forces you to hold and maintain poses and positions that directly effect your climbing muscles, such as your low back, your core, your hamstrings, hip flexors, and quads for extended periods just as in climbing repeats.

Power Yoga will teach control and add a new layer of strength that classic weight training and even cycling can't match. I try to use it in my training at least once every other week and sometimes I use it just before or just after an ME Interval for added difficulty and a new challenge.

Combine these two muscular endurance challenging tactics together in as many ways as you can imagine and you will greatly improve not only your

ME, but your climbing skills and lactate threshold at the same time. Talk about a "zen moment"!

## ***CLIMBING ELEMENT 2: Improve Your Low Back Strength and Durability***

The centerpiece for improved climbing begins and ends with the strength and durability of your low back. Climb any extended, steep hill or mountain and you'll know exactly what I mean. Focus on making it stronger and you will have the primary tool you need to improve your climbing--Guaranteed!

The low back represents the centerpiece from which the large muscles of the hamstrings and glutes can create leverage from which to climb with. If the low back is weak, fatigued, rigid and inflexible, the entire body during a climb will begin to crack and break down and ultimately lead to a complete loss of power and control.

We all know instinctively that we need to condition and work on the physical conditioning of our low backs, but because it seems so simple and innocuous, many of us never do the little things to keep it strong and conditioned. And all the while we're working on other elements such as ME, Power, and Endurance, it is our low back durability that will determine long term improvement.

The funny thing is that the power, strength, and endurance of the low back is the net result of just about every other muscle and joint that revolves around it. From the alignment of the hips and spine to the strength and flexibility of the hamstrings and abdomen, the low back is truly part of a larger network that must all be well balanced and maintained if it is to improve. Let's discuss three issues one needs to address to develop a strong, fluid, stable low back for improved climbing skills.

**1. You MUST keep the hamstrings flexible!** One of the key issues for chronic low back fatigue isn't just a weak back, but tight hamstrings. Especially for the cyclist whose repeated actions never really places the knee through a full range of motion and as a result has a tendency for tight hamstrings. Unfortunately most people do a tug here and a pull there on these vital climbing muscles and leave it at that.

The hamstrings require deep, well-organized stretches in order to truly open

them and keep them strong and recovered. From using yoga positions to more classic stretching with a stability ball, one must have a well-put together hamstring stretching agenda to stay on top of the potential problem. Not only will it improve the strength of your low back, but it will help improve your climbing position and posture both in and out of the saddle. If you can't stay aero or in the drops very long your hamstrings are most definitely one of your limiters.

**2. You must BALANCE strength and flexibility in all of the core muscles.** Cyclists unfortunately have a "quad only" vantage point in relation to training. We overdue the training and focus on the quads and not enough on the hamstrings, hip flexors, glutes and low back. This imbalance can create a forward pitch in the posture of cyclists that will result in a loss of potential power on the bike while climbing.

A good low back conditioning routine is perfectly balanced with strength and flexibility exercise for both the front side as well as the backside of the body. You can't just do squats and hope to build low back and climbing strength, you must do the little things that make the low back complete.

**3. You must CONSISTENTLY train and condition your low back OFF THE BIKE, not just while you're on it.** Yes, you can train the muscles of the back to improve while on the bike by doing more climbing, but to maintain improvement and add the flexibility element. You must do more and you must do it consistently.

Many of us start a low back conditioning program, but either never do it enough or get caught in the same routine and never add new elements or keep it too simple and not place enough priority on low back training.

I guarantee that if you put just 15 minutes of direct strength conditioning and 15 minutes of flexibility for the low back and hamstrings into your regular routine, YEAR ROUND you will boost your climbing skills faster than any other training program there is.

If you know that your low back strength and hamstring flexibility is a limiter for you then you may be interested in my: *"Fix the Back, Stay in the Drops"* Workout Routine included in my Cyclo-ZEN Mental Toughness and Recovery Program. It's a simple, balanced and effective way to add new layers of low back strength and durability to your training program with no equipment and you can do it anywhere.

### **CLIMBING ELEMENT 3:**

#### ***Methodically and Diligently Boost Your Climbing Cadence***

There has been a complete paradigm shift in the thinking of climbing cadence due in large part to our friend Lance Armstrong. His unique ability to spin at higher RPMs of 100+ has allowed him to climb harder and faster than his body type should allow him to do.

It has been his dedication to developing the mental and physical skills needed to maintain high RPMs up mountains that has allowed him to stay stronger and fresher than the competition and is probably the single largest contributing factor to his 6 years of climbing domination.

If you want to be a better climber, you may want to learn some lessons from the higher climbing cadence techniques. Now, that's not to say that you need to spin at 90+ RPMs for climbing, but maybe find new techniques to increase your "natural" climbing cadence 3-10 RPM for improved efficiency and increased climbing speed and power for longer periods of time.

Let's discuss some ways of helping you increase your natural climbing RPM and improve your overall cadence and efficiency on the bike.

**1. Add at least one to two higher cadence ME training sessions to your bike training schedule and focus on increasing your cadence by 1-3% to start.** Don't make the mistake of jumping from 75 RPM to 100 RPM overnight. It takes time and discipline for your body to make this physiological adjustment and could result in overuse injuries and over-training if you're not careful.

Start with 3-5 minute intervals spaced out over a 75-90 minute ride and pick various gradient hills to practice the increased cadence. Now to accomplish this at first you're going to have to gear down to spin higher. Once you've focused and mastered the higher spin rate, work on gradually gearing back up at the same RPM for improved power and climbing speeds.

**2. Utilize Power Yoga to help you to acquire contra-lateral reflexes to get more power out of your muscles and increase body control. What??** Simply put, teach your body to contract opposing muscles to create more power and stability. For instance learning to contract your right quad and

your left hamstring forcefully at the same time just as you need to on the bike, especially for climbing.

This is also known as agility or the ability to contract several opposing muscles simultaneously. Power Yoga is ideal for this discipline due to its necessity for your body to balance and oppose itself for stability. Several Power Yoga poses cannot be achieved without your body and your mind contracting opposite muscles. This adds new levels of muscular control that is vital to you increasing your cadence and efficiency on the bike.

**3. Use high cadence hill repeats that average 5-10 RPMs over your ideal cadence that you're trying to achieve.** For instance, if your natural climbing cadence is 80 RPM and you hope to increase it to 85 RPM for improved climbing speeds, then practice intervals of 3-10 minutes at 90-95 RPM at a slightly lower gearing. Repeat this 2-4 times in a workout every week to begin to overshoot your cadence marker and lay the foundation for improved climbing speed. This technique works really, really well and has helped me move my natural climbing cadence of 75 all the way up to 94 over the course of the past two years. As a result my climbing skills have improved 10 fold and I have turned my climbing into my greatest strength on the bike.

#### ***CLIMBING ELEMENT 4: Boost the Power and Lighten the Load***

Climbing is all about gravity and mass. It's simple really. The more mass an object has the more work needs to be done to move that mass against the force of gravity. In our case as aspiring climbers we need to have less mass and more potential for work or power in this case.

We call it our strength to weight ratio (or power to weight ratio) and it is the direct determinant of how fast we can go up a hill or mountain. If we can lighten our mass and increase our power we will move faster and with less effort needed to produce the same outcome. This is good, because of any limitation due to genetics we can deal with this issue head on through several tactics and techniques both on and off the bike.

Let's discuss two elements needed to increase our power and lower our mass so that we may climb faster and with greater ease.

**1. The first is obvious and probably the element we should focus on the most - developing more power at the same weight or mass.** If you're not big on losing weight or removing those sticky buns before a ride, then this is the tactic for you.

There are two kinds of power in relation to climbing, the first is one that we've already talked about in element one, **muscular endurance** or the ability to sustain consistent power for extended periods of time. We can use ME Intervals, hill repeats, and power yoga to help us develop this type of power as it is the most used power mode in climbing.

The second is **explosive power** or short bursts of high power for much shorter lengths of time. This type of power is actually very important as well as it addresses the issues of changes in incline on a hill or maybe an acceleration from a competitor. This explosive power is best worked on with shorter, steeper climbs that only last 60 seconds or less. You can also work on this explosive power with short, intense cross-training exercises such as Hindu squats, Hindu push-ups, plyometrics and other power provoking exercises performed off the bike.

You can also use longer duration ME intervals layered with short intense power bursts every few minutes to practice changes in power demand.

**2. The second component of an improved power to weight ratio is to lose mass.** Real brain trust on this one, but one that cannot be undersold. If you really want to improve your climbing the most profound way to do it is to lighten the load and keep the same or slightly higher power potential.

Right away most cyclists revert to calorie deprivation or excessive training to achieve this change in mass. Let me caution you, although it is tempting to drop calories and train more it can come back to hurt you in the end with fatigue and a lack of recoverability. Not only that, but restrictive diets and over-training do nothing more than lower your metabolism and catabolise muscle tissue which will ultimately reduce your power potential.

That being said we can lower calories slightly over time (no more than 250/day) and gradually increase our mileage to produce a leaner, lighter frame. The best advice is to eat high energy, low weight foods like lean meats and fish, beans, lentils, and high fiber cereals and grains. Avoid all the crap and artificial foods that rob us of our natural energy.

The best scenario is to focus on both and let them work together. Focus on improving your sustainable power and explosive power while watching what you eat and controlling your portions to lighten your mass. Put them both together and you'll be topping 3000 foot climbs before with confidence and ease before you know it!

### ***CLIMBING ELEMENT 5: Bolster Your Mental Toughness and Focus Your Breath***

Watch any good climber and you will see someone with a stone face and a mastery of breathe and body control. No energy is wasted and no breath is underutilized. To them it's not a physical obstacle, but a mental one. A test of mettle and mental toughness to endure extreme discomfort.

Lance is a great example of someone who inherently is not built to be a great climber, but has turned it into one of his most powerful strengths as a result of harnessing his mental toughness and focusing on his breath and body control. He has practiced and mastered the ability to deal with the pain. Granted, overcoming cancer was probably his single greatest teacher. We can learn a lot from this lesson of mental toughness and focus.

Most of us aren't built to be great climbers, but many of us can be if we can toughen our resolve and learn how to get the maximum out of our bodies while conserving our energy. We can improve our climbing and our tolerance of pain by practicing, focusing and developing our mental toughness both on and off the bike.

How can you toughen up and teach yourself to deal with the discomfort of climbing a challenging hill or mountain on your bike? Let's discuss three things you can do to practice developing your mental toughness:

**1. Incorporate power yoga into your training routine frequently.** Yes, I already mentioned this in secret 1 as we discussed muscular endurance. I think you will recall that I described muscular endurance as a true test of mental toughness. So, by using power yoga as a tool to teach your body to overcome discomfort and pain while maintaining breath and focus is pivotal to increasing your climbing skills and performance.

Hold a yoga chair position for 90 seconds or maybe repeat an asana (several



yoga poses in a row) 4 to 5 times without break and tell me if it doesn't test your mental toughness and breath just like a hard steep climb.

**2. Pick one or two workouts a week on or off the bike that you really don't enjoy.** Yes, that's right, don't enjoy! Maybe it's a route with endless difficult climbs or strong headwinds or maybe continuous gradual up hills with no reprieves. Pick sections and really hammer it out and don't stop. Teach your body to look past the physical and absolve the pain. Teach it to overcome fear and trepidation and push yourself past what you think is possible even if it's only for a few seconds.

Use this technique sparingly to avoid over-training and most importantly go into these workouts with the sole intent to push mentally. You must recognize and embrace the mental pain if you are to improve your mental toughness and resolve. Focus on your breath and teach yourself to channel your energy efficiently to the pedals.

**3. Incorporate a "mantra" or "positive affirmation" along with the tactics above to get through the pain and the fear.** You must align yourself with something strong and magical if you want to break barriers of physical and mental performance. Pick a word, saying, or image or moment in time that will help propel you past your mountain of pain. It may sound corny, but it may be the single most important part of developing your mental toughness and ultimately your climbing skills.

**Developing A "Cottage of Wattage"** Watching the BIG TT specialists yesterday in the prologue I loved catching a glimpse of the riders from behind.

And yes, I was looking at their butts! Talk about power from behind! Their hamstrings, calves, and glutes look more like forged steel than human flesh!

That's where the power is coming from my friends. That's what we need to focus on!

In my recent interview with former PRO cyclist, Chris McGovern, (part of Cyclo-SPEED due out in late July) he termed this area as the "cottage of wattage" or the definitive place where the power comes from. Below are some keys that Chris shared with me to help you get more power for your "cottage of wattage":

### **"Cottage of Wattage" Training Tips:**

1. Strength Training on the bike with high gear & low cadence interval

sessions like my overspin/overpower intervals once a week. Get it at <http://cyclo-zen.com/combo/SPEED.html>

2. More emphasis on core and low back conditioning at least once per week to create a more stable platform for your cottage of wattage.

3. More hamstring strength training and flexibility work! At least every other day for the flexibility work (Cyclo-CORE stretching routine after hard rides & Power Yoga once a week)

4. More POWER from cross-training! Use the Cyclo-ZEN 8 minute Power Routine (as many rounds as you can stomach) once per week to skyrocket your cottage of wattage! Serious stuff, so stay at your own level and look to advance week to week.

All these tips and suggestions will help you focus direct on your cottage of wattage and help your power, climbing speed, and performance on the bike improve dramatically.

## **SUFFERING**

I woke up this morning at 6 am to watch the exciting stage 9 of the Tour de France. Why? Because today is really the first day of mountain suffering!

Why do we love to watch other riders suffer anyway? Are we sadistic? Do we enjoy other people's pain? Are we sick?

Well . . . YES. In any other venue this would be disturbing, but being a cyclist we have the right to enjoy watching the pain because if you've been riding long enough you know what it means to suffer!

You can't improve as a cyclist UNLESS you can suffer! The good news is . . . you can TRAIN to suffer. I have some suggestions for you to learn how to suffer better.

**SUFFERING Tip 1: Don't let the pain take hold of your mind.** You can burn, you can hurt. You can sweat and bleed, but NEVER, EVER allow your mind to get negative on the pain. It's so easy to lose your confidence once

you let the pain set in mentally. You must find other ways to channel the pain out. (suggestions below)

**SUFFERING Tip 2: Set a suffering tempo and rhythm.** 1..2..3..4..1... The fastest way to let your pain set in is to lose a sustainable tempo and rhythm YOU can hold. Each of us have natural rhythms that we can keep while climbing, time trialing, and overall suffering. It's imperative that we maintain this tempo as often as we can. If we lose tempo to catch a break or to make a break, we must develop the discipline to regain our tempo & FAST.

**SUFFERING Tip 3: Stay calm and collected when tempo breaks.** It's inevitable that during a hard ride, especially one with others, that you will lose your tempo. That's OK. Don't panic! Tell yourself to calm down, breathe, relax, and set back into your tempo and hope to catch up on the other side. Panic and you'll redline your heart and energy systems. Yoga helps to practice.

**SUFFERING Tip 4: Don't clinch and pinch!** When you suffer it's so easy to clinch down into your shoulder blades and close off your lungs and diaphragm. It's so easy to pinch into the handlebars and over-grip. Both of these natural human tendencies under stress decrease oxygen flow, increase energy demands and sets a cue to your brain that you've accepted the pain.

**SUFFERING Tip 5: You must scan your body every 10 to 20 sec** while you suffer to remain a relaxed and fluid posture. Repeat the following body scan, or something like it while you suffer and you will keep the pain at bay.  
strong legs . . . open lungs . . relaxed palms . . loose face . . fluid pace . .  
strong legs . . . open lungs . . relaxed palms . . loose face . . fluid pace . .  
strong legs . . . open lungs . . relaxed palms . . loose face . . fluid pace . .

**SUFFERING Tip 6: Your suffering is relative!** Never forget that if you're suffering, more than likely everyone around you is suffering as well. Also, try to think of other things in your life that have challenged you and your mettle and how you overcame that suffering. Sometimes the pain of climbing a big hill or a grueling TT is minor in comparison to a life altering stress situation. Look what suffering through cancer has done for Lance. Makes climbing an Alp seem pretty insignificant doesn't it? Suffering isn't a bad thing. It lets us know that we're working for progress. It's a marker of our courage and need to improve.

### **Recovery Rules for Mortals:**

**1. ALWAYS take at least 1 DAY OFF (passive recovery) each and every week.** NO activity.

**2. Take 1 to 2 ACTIVE recovery days each week during hard training weeks.** This means that you can be out on your bike with a light spin, little terrain, and a low HR. This helps to speed the removal of waste products of hard training and keeps your legs in tempo. Active recovery can also be spent off the bike with hiking, walking, light flexibility work, and my recovery yoga from Cyclo-ZEN (preferred and most beneficial active recovery)

**3. ALWAYS do a post-ride stretching routine (5 to 15 minutes) after ALL hard rides** to speed recovery and further remove waste products that cause fatigue and soreness. I recommend Cyclo-CORE 15 minute flexibility routine OR Cyclo-ZEN low back flexibility routine. Quick and effective.

**4. Do cross training once a week** to give your body a new stimulus and allow for recovery of your 'cycling system'. This is not really a recovery session, but a change of scenery that can sometimes be just as beneficial. I do Cyclo-CORE body-weight conditioning OR functional training OR the Cyclo-ZEN 8 minute power routine OR 30 minute Power Yoga. Careful NOT to place their workouts too close to a hard ride and these are best done the day before an OFF training day.

That's a start for recovery. It can be active or passive. Bottom line -- You have to recover enough each week to allow your body to progress. **There is no faster way to kill your fitness than to NOT have recovery days.**

### **The 3 Keys to Low Back Longevity:**

#### **KEY #1: Diligently Maintain & Challenge Your Flexibility!**

More Than Just the Low Back Strength: The MOST important part of low back durability is keeping the hamstrings, glutes, IT band, and hip flexors loose, open, and flexible! I can't stress this enough.

Most people think it's only about core strength and or low back strength. This is NOT true. In fact people that do only crunches and the occasional low back strength exercises without adding in the proper flexibility work could be makin their situation worse!

## **How Much Flexibility Work and When:**

I recommend doing a bare minimum of three post-ride flexibility and low back recovery sessions every week for tight individuals. You know who you are! If you hope to make your back stronger and more powerful, this is your first place to start.

I recommend to my customers, either the 20 minute thorough full body flexibility routine from Cyclo-CORE once a week and then the 'fix the back, stray in the drops' STRETCHING routine exclusively for the low back complex and surrounding muscles twice a week. This has worked miracles for hundreds of my customers with low back problems. Learn more. . .

## **Using Yoga as a Tool for More Progress:**

If you are in really rough shape and want to see even more improvement I recommend something like my 30 minute POWER Yoga Routine or the 30 Minute RECOVERY Yoga routine from Cyclo-ZEN to really get into your low back and hamstrings deeply. I would recommend adding one of these workouts once every other week along with your riding schedule. Great to do in the morning.

## **Intermittent Flexibility Sessions:**

One of my personal secrets to keeping the hamstring-calf- low back complex open and functional is stretching all day long as often as I can. I get up from the desk every 60 to 90 minutes and stretch my hamstrings and calves on the stairs. I stretch in the morning in the shower by doing forward bends, standing twists and other stretches from my Cyclo-ZEN workouts. Learn more . . .

The more places you find to keep the muscles open, the more progress you will see.

## **Consistency is Everything!**

You must do this whole flexibility process on an ongoing basis! It's a use-it-or-

lose-it scenario with flexibility. Few of us are naturally flexible and must constantly work at it for it to maintain and improve.

If you truly want to improve and solve your low back issues, then you must put in your time and do the work. It won't just come to you. It's really not that hard if you stay on top of it.

### **CORE Conditioning IS NOT About a 'Six Pack':**

Core Conditioning is often misunderstood by the masses. To most people it means simple crunches, abdominal training, and developing a washboard stomach. Although this may be a sideline benefit to doing core training along with proper diet it IS NOT what core training is about. It's much deeper than that!

When it comes to your low back longevity, core training plays a much more 'underlying role'. I mean that as literally as it sounds. Instead of thinking about your core as a group of muscles you can see, think of the core as an underlying network of support beams holding and positioning your body in correct alignment, like a building.

### **Are You Wearing Your Girdle?**

The CORE is actually several muscles working together to create a stable platform for your spine. However, the most important muscle in that network is the one we will focus on today. It's called the Transverse Abdominal Plane (TAP).

I like to think about the TAP as our body's natural girdle. Kind of like what women used to wear in colonial times to pinch in their waist and lift up their chest.

### **The Transverse Abdominal Plane (TAP) and Cycling:**

For cyclists, it's kind of the same idea. When well conditioned and engaged, the TAP does several key things to help us ride stronger:

1. The TAP creates internal pressure from 360 degrees around the body that

stabilizes the spine, hips, and chest cavity to optimize our posture that aligns our kinetic chain (our natural flow of energy).

2. The TAP, when engaged offers a rigid and stable platform for our legs to drive force down into the pedals. Without an engaged TAP, the force production of the legs is diminished.

3. As the TAP engages the spine, it elevates the chest cavity, opening the breathing pathways for improved oxygen uptake. This is probably one of the most important aspects of a strong TAP. More air is more oxygen. More oxygen is more energy production.

### **Working the TAP:**

Anyone that has used my CORE & ZEN Programs is definitely aware of how much attention I give to the Transverse Plane of the CORE. I consider it the focal point of all my workouts and I'd say that just about every exercise I offer engages the TAP.

A strong TAP means a well positioned hip girdle and spinal column. This is how TAP training plays such an integral role in your low back longevity. Most people don't just have a weak low back, they have a greatly underdeveloped TAP. This is why they are out of alignment and have chronic low back pain and fatigue and are more susceptible to low back conditions.

### **Engaging the TAP Through Functional Movements:**

There are several ways to learn to engage the TAP. Everything from static holds to functional movements with light weights. I also incorporate a stability ball which is great for engaging the TAP if used correctly. There are hundreds of exercises that one can use. I choose the one's that have the greatest impact in the TAP first.

### **The TAP and Yoga:**

One of the most powerful ways to engage and enliven the TAP is with Yoga and several of the poses that I chose specifically from my experience with yoga.

### **The TAP and Gravity:**

My greatest secret for engaging the TAP is to utilize gravity and my body-weight. No other form of training can help you capitalize on your core strength better than body weight conditioning. No weights. No fancy equipment. No Gyms. Just old fashioned, natural movements that engage the core by making you balance, adjust, and align your body. Not easy stuff and as anyone that has done my workouts can attest...they are very challenging exercises.

### **Opposite Style Climbing Intervals:**

**OBJECTIVES:** Teach your body 7 mind discipline, even when it's not logical to maintain tempo or climbing style. Promote more mental toughness and skills that can be used when riding with others. Develop strength in both in and out of the saddle riding to add to your riding arsenal. Mix things up and add fun challenges to otherwise familiar and boring rides you've done a hundred times before!

1. Pick a 30 to 60 mile course that you frequent on your bike and know very well. Make sure it has as many hills, and as many types of hills as you can get in that one ride, even if they are short and steep or long and barely headed up.

2. Ride tempo (moderate hard pace) to the base of the first hill (only if you have completed a light 5 mile warm-up or so) and pick the opposite climbing style that you would use for the hill. So if it's long and gradual, get OUT of the saddle and quick step for the ENTIRE length of the hill! YES, this is NOT how you would typically approach this hill type and not recommended each time you do it. HOWEVER, by changing the style you force yourself to change in dynamics and capacity. PLUS, if the hill takes longer than one to two minutes to climb and you're out of the saddle . . . OUCH! That's going to really challenge your core and hip flexors AND your mental toughness!

**NOTE:** I understand that gradients change within a hill climb and usually you would change position throughout. In this case pick the OPPOSITE of the GENERAL climbing position and STICK it out all the way. This is the DISCIPLINE portion that is so critical! Think of these intervals as illogical ways of accomplishing logical results.

3. Once to the top, continue on to the next interval climb. between each climb you're riding a strong TEMPO. This is NOT light spinning. Consider the



entire ride other than warm-up and cool-down a FITNESS ride and one that will challenge you the entire time.

4. At the next climb, follow protocol and do the OPPOSITE climbing position to the top that you normally would and HOLD it no matter what. So, even if you're in the saddle and it pitches WAY UP, you stay in the saddle and grind it out. THIS is very important and you must stay mentally strong here!

5. Get to the top and continue strong tempo onward to the next interval site. This may continue for the entire ride for as long as 60 miles if you like. Keep in mind however, that this is a tough sort of ride and one that requires good rest before and after to allow for improvements in fitness.

NOTE: If you do not have any hills near or around you, meaning you're a flat lander, you may do this exact same interval pattern into stiff headwinds and/or get out of the saddle for 2 to 5 minutes and jog to simulate the out of the saddle climbing and mix that with a tough gearing (15 and below) seated, low cadence grind fest to simulate seated climbing. Mix these with tempo riding in-between. VERY HARD and great for everyone as a way to mix it up.

NOTE: If you have VERY long climbs that usually take over 10 minutes, you may alternate climbing position throughout the climb, but try to stay out of the saddle for at least 3 minutes each time. This is tough at first, but boy does it work! If you can stay out of the saddle longer, give it a go.

POST-RIDE RECOVERY: Because this workout is so different and unconventional from every other sort of ride I STRONGLY suggest you follow my advice and perform a post-ride recovery session to prevent fatigue and soreness from prolonged out of the saddle climbing. Use the Cyclo-CORE 15 minute full body flexibility routine when you get home OR you can use the Cyclo-ZEN 'Fix the Back, Stay in the Drops' STRETCHING routine as the low back got one heck of a workout on the intervals.

FINAL NOTE: I would only use this sort of interval workout once every month on a day that you are dreading the same old boring ride and want to shake it up a bit. This is really fun and challenging and will make you a more disciplined and well rounded cyclist.

Ride Hard. Do the Opposite of Normal. Have Fun & Mix it Up!

### **Mind/Body/Soul Preparation Tips:**

## **Technique 1: Psyche Yourself DOWN!**

Most people think that the solution to doing well in an event, race or otherwise is to psyche themselves UP! Do you know what that really means? STRESS!!!!

The added stress of trying to excite your body to perform, especially when you do it for days beforehand will rob you of precious energy you need for the ride or race.

Psyching yourself up is something you do for a fight or maybe a 100 meter sprint, but not a road race or cycling event. You must conserve your energy, relax your mind, replenish your mental state.

A good cyclist is a relaxed cyclist with a clear and open mind. Don't clutter it with "I should have done more intervals" or "I wish I had just one more rest day" or "I know that climb up Appalachian Gap is going to pop me".

These negative or anxiety driven mental states will become self-fulfilling prophecies. Squash them now!

### **POSITIVE AFFIRMATIONS:**

You must convince yourself of your strength and energize your mind and body with positive affirmations. This is a sort of active, ongoing form of meditation or mantra.

"I will remain calm, focused, and relaxed while I ride."

"I will float and soar over each hill / mountain I encounter."

"I will ride my own race and search for enjoyment while I ride."

"My legs are strong, powerful, and swift."

Pick whatever you want to reaffirm your place and state of positive influence before, during, and even after you ride. It works!!!! I will be repeating things like this today as I drive my family towards VT. I will breathe and open my mind, not cloud it with anxiety and fear, and trust me, I should be afraid of this one!

### **ACTIVE AFFIRMATIONS:**

I will also be using these positive affirmations in my final physical preparations for the ride. I'll be stretching with my CORE stretching routine after a light spin today to open and release stress from my body. Tomorrow, one day before the ride I will also do some stretching and a little bit of my yoga from ZEN to work on my breath and relax and open my mind and body. Works great! Make Your Persistence Pay Off!

Anyway, this is not about my persistence, but about yours. I want to encourage you to be persistent at everything you care about and have passion for. Cycling or otherwise.

**Persistence** is the ONE thing that you have complete control over regardless of talent, genetics, and ability.

One of the things I've learned from working with thousands of people over the years is that the ones that succeeded are usually the ones that failed the most! Yes, you read that correctly.

It was their persistence to get back up and try again and again and again that made them successful. Do you know how many attempts it took Thomas Edison to invent the light bulb? Over two years of failed attempts! 6,000 different carbonized plant fibers that didn't work! See . . . persistence pays off!

Whether you choose to ride a bike to lose 20 pounds and reduce your cholesterol and blood pressure or you choose to ride for the conquest of miles traveled or you ride for the competition to move one day from CAT 4 to CAT 1 racing. Do it with persistence! Do it with unrelenting determination!

Never stop. Never stop believing in yourself. You can do anything you set your mind to. More importantly . . . set your heart to.

I don't care if my persistence actually makes you buy= something from me or not. I'm glad just to have you here and learn from you along the way.

What I do hope is that you learn from my experiences, failures, and triumphs and you recognize that it's my persistence that makes me successful. Use me as a launching pad to motivate yourself to pursue your dreams and ambitions. Use me as a persistent reminder that no matter what the obstacles, there is always a way to get over, under, or around them.

If you want to live your dream, you have to get off your butt and go and get it. Expect to fail! In fact . . . expect to fail a lot! I did! BUT, there is no other way to achieve your dreams and accomplish your goals than to try. Especially when you try with persistence!