

Here is an article I wrote for the Calgary 70.3 E-Zine



The Doctrine

It's a lifestyle, not a workout.



Ironman 101

Issue #3

Embrace Intensity

I've been involved in competitive sport for more than half my life now. For me, some noticeable things have happened to the sport of cycling, running, and triathlon. No matter how awesome I think a bike looks one year, they just keep getting cooler as the years go on. I can't wait to tell my daughter in 10 years, "No kidding, we used to shift using cables! Crazy eh?" Shoe designers must be so jealous of the bike industry. I can't imagine a shoe engineer getting excited to change the colour of next year's shoe line up while being subject to watch the advancements in bike component and frame manufacturing. Anyway, no matter what any of us have observed over the years, all of us have something in common.

The years.

Yes, we've aged. Gracefully, sure, but we all have more miles on the odometer. Unfortunately, a lot of us are training like we were 25 year olds still. True, we know we can't handle multiple days of intensity as well anymore, and we know we can't stop at McDonalds after a long ride and expect to feel awesome the next day like we used to, but there are fundamental changes that need to be made in your training over the years that need to be addressed and modified. I will talk about one of them for this month's article, regular high intensity.

I get frustrated when I hear of athletes who turn to a 'pure base' diet over the winter. Come spring they can't figure out why they feel so slow. They justify their friend's beating them over and over again by telling them they are peaking too early and will surely suffer burn out. When they continue to be crushed well into Cyclo-Cross season the excuses get a little weak. Chances are, 'pure base' isn't really working for this athlete, but I'll bet you his solution will be to spend more 'LSD' in the saddle.

As you age, it isn't as easy as it once was when you were 25 to ramp the lactic threshold, lose the weight, and morph into a racer from the deep recesses of the winter. If you let yourself slip, even

for a month, you'll be fighting tooth and nail to regain your past splendor (our memories are always very gracious).

If you are into Masters racing for the right reasons; fitting it sustainably into your family's lifestyle, truly enjoying the spirit of competition, making other people suffer, and having a wicked bike, then you need to Embrace Intensity year round. No question.

So when your competitors in spring wonder why you seem to be a different athlete, let them know you are on EI. They'll assume you mean Employment Insurance and make cracks about the government paying you to ride a bike and how you should be riding pro for Team Stephen Harper. But you'll know the truth; you've Embraced Intensity.

This isn't to say you need to plan an 'A' race every month in the winter; actually quite the opposite. If you live in the hellish north you'll have to turn your gaze away from riding outside. But you have options. Chill out, don't prep, keep training, and find a sport that cross over to your favourite discipline and find an eclectic group of racers that seem to appear out of the woodwork on weekends to hammer each other regardless of the environmental conditions. These groups always exist. Be they cross country skiers, snowshoers, trail runners, whatever, they exist.

For me, the past 7 years have been filled with the winter cross-country running series put on by a great local group of 'git-r-duns' with a purpose. Every 2 weeks, regardless of the crazy temperatures our city endures, we find a trail, a few frozen creeks, several ridiculous pitches, and say 'GO!' We then proceed to hammer each other until our smiling, frozen, pain-washed bodies cross the finish line. It's perfect!

During these races, which are basically cyclo-cross races with no bikes (read: extremely painful and beneficial) I practice race tactics I want to have nailed come spring. I learn how my body/mind reacts to attacking an opponent when I feel good, or more importantly, when I don't. I learn to go hard when I don't want to, and push myself to my limits with no excuses. So I am benefitting from these races more than two-fold. For starters, I am keeping my engine running, learning tactics, and learning a little about myself every race. There is no prize money, and no one wants to here if you 'trained through this'.

The moral of the story is this: If you are a Master's athlete in off-season, I recommend doing some form of sustained high intensity effort at least every 2 weeks. Tailor your workouts slightly but not excessively to accommodate them (mainly your recovery). Don't go into these races with a mental pressure that a lot of triathletes have when approaching a race they've spent a lot of money to enter and attend. Show up, look around, smile... then leave everything on the course! I've recently started experimenting running with a camera mounted to my toque. These have turned out much better than I ever imagined. I'd like to share them since they show a few things. One, with the two perspectives, it doesn't matter where you are in the pack; the racing is just as ferocious and beneficial physically and mentally. Two, you can see some tactics employed by racers to inflict as much pain on each other as possible. Three, it's fun to re-live the race!

This race: [Nose Creek XC](#) started off into a stiff headwind. You can see the hesitation of the lead runners to take the front spot. I was thinking I couldn't get better bike race training in the winter

if I tried!! When I attacked, I knew I had to sprint hard for as long as possible before turning into the headwind. I knew I needed a gap to ensure my competitors were working just as hard as me. Unfortunately these are tactics needed by most Ironman athletes on a flat course these days☺.

This race: [12 Mile Coulee XC](#) I had a disastrous start that left me well off the lead pack. My good friend managed to look back and realize his good fortune and laid it down off the front. What ensued was a great workout for both of us!

Now get out there and go hard!

It's a lifestyle, not a workout,

Dr. Trev Williams

thedoctrine.ca Training to Race

speedtheoryteam.com Speed Theory Cycling Ringleader