

The Water Corporation Five Dams Challenge 14 March 2010

Fact Sheet 1 - Training to ride 200+ kilometres in a day

Part 1: Preparation and Training

Riding over 200 km is a huge achievement and a major drain on the body's energy stores. Being fit doesn't necessarily mean you'll be able to complete the distance.

The limiting factor in a ride of this length is how much energy (glucose) you have stored in your muscles and how 'efficiently' you use it on the day. [Glucose is stored in the muscles and liver as glycogen]

Your training should aim to maximise glycogen storage and to train your body to use it sparingly.

Energy Stores in the Muscles

The muscles predominantly use glucose and fat as fuels when you are exercising. They always need glucose and use fat when the intensity is such that there is sufficient oxygen to burn it. At low intensity exercise the body uses a greater proportion of fat. At very high intensities the muscles are using glucose almost exclusively.

Maximising Glycogen Storage

Your muscles respond to the demands placed on them and the fuel supplied. The key to maximising the glycogen stores is to train in a way that depletes the stores and then feed them carbohydrates so they can increase their stores. Using your glycogen stores could involve a long ride at a steady pace or a shorter, faster ride, possibly incorporating some sprint intervals. Once glycogen stores have been used up, it is important to replace them as quickly as possible. The muscles are more receptive to carbohydrates in the first 2 hours after exercise so it is important to eat as soon as possible after training. Ideally, eat within 30 minutes of finishing your ride. (Just after you have finished stretching!!)

Many people make the mistake of not eating soon enough after training and they miss the best time to get glucose back into the muscles.

Drink Plenty (of water)

The muscles store glucose in combination with water so it is very important to drink plenty of water after exercise. If you are dehydrated you may reduce the amount of glucose that is stored as glycogen. Like eating, try to drink as much as you can in the first 2 hours after training.

Don't Overtrain

One of the dangers of preparing for a 200 km ride is doing too much.

If you train when the muscles are already fatigued, you won't perform as well and the muscles won't adapt to the demands placed on them. It is when you are resting after exercise that the body adapts and gets fitter. If you are doing so many miles that you are always tired, your muscles

won't get fitter. You are much better doing only one long ride per week with adequate time to recover. Two short, faster rides and one longer, moderate pace ride per week would be ideal.

The Week Before the Ride

As the ride gets closer, the temptation is to do more and more kilometres thinking you are getting fitter. It is a better strategy to stick to your normal training routine with the exception that you shorten the rides in the 2-3 days just before the event. Certainly don't go out and try to do 'extra' the day before; all you will do is deplete valuable glycogen stores. Shorter, faster rides are a better option in the week before.

Even trying an alternative activity (which all cyclists should be doing anyway) like swimming or walking is a good idea in the days just before the ride. However, don't try something you aren't used to and end up sore or injured!

David Beard is one of Australia's leading adult health and fitness specialists. With over 3 decades in the health, fitness and aged care industries, he is well placed to advise on fitness for life. David conducts training and consulting to organisation's that know the importance of having fit and healthy staff. He also offers health and fitness coaching to individuals who need to incorporate exercise into their busy routine and want to get the best return from their effort. David is also an experienced cyclist having ridden with the Old Papas group for 25 years. David completed the inaugural Five Dams ride in June 1998. David can be contacted on 0419907432 or david@lifelongfitness.info. Sign up to David's free fitness newsletter '**Stay Sharp**' at www.lifelongfitness.net

Please Note: This article has been prepared as a general guide for the preparation for an event of this nature. It may not be suitable for all riders, as there will be many differences arising from factors such as age, riding experience and level of fitness. All riders are encouraged to obtain individual advice from an appropriately qualified professional to ensure that training is tailored to meet their needs.