

PLANNING YOUR SEASON

Use your season evaluation to map the future

In the last column, we laid out a formula for evaluating your 2006 season (*VeloNews*, February 5). The evaluation consisted of analyzing what went well, what went poorly and what you enjoyed — all with the help of a teammate or coach. Now it's time to use that information to pick out target races and then plan your training around them. Here are four steps for having your best year yet in 2007.

STEP 1

Follow your fun. Just because your hometown criterium happens to be an NRC race doesn't mean you have to base your entire year around it if you don't like crits. Instead, highlight the races on the 2007 calendar that you enjoy, and a few that look interesting. Don't limit yourself to your "focus" events. If you're a road rider, don't be afraid to check out the local mountain-bike calendar. Trying new things can add a spark to your routine, as long as they're complementary to your primary goals.

If you're part of a team or group that does events together, gather the gang for coffee or exchange thoughts over email until a planned calendar starts to take shape.

STEP 2

Take a long view. Once you've picked out the events you're interested in, see where they fall in the calendar year. Are they evenly spaced throughout the year, or do you have a clump of events in a certain time frame you want to peak for?

Now determine how to get there. If you're targeting a single event or clump of events, what are some preceding minor events or milestones you can use to make sure you're on the right path? If you're aiming for season-long consistency, how can you monitor and measure yourself? Write it down.

When planning your season, remember that form equals fitness plus freshness. The fitness you have today is based on your last 6-8 weeks of training. Your training over the past week is important, but your body has barely had time to adapt to it, so it's primarily contributing to fatigue. Therefore, to have great form for an event, you need a combination of specific fitness from your last 6-8 weeks worth of work, combined with a high degree of freshness from a somewhat lowered training volume over the past 7-10 days.

STEP 3

Do a rough sketch. Now plan how much of what type of training to do, and when. This isn't a specific plan of daily workouts, but a general overview of your training cycles.

If you're aiming to be consistently good from May through October, write in an increasing load of primarily aerobic work starting in March. Use the early races to elevate your fitness even more and then look for



good opportunities to take off the bike or cut way back on intensity. Those periods are often found immediately after a big multi-day event.

If you're looking to peak once or twice during the year, first build up a large volume of primarily aerobic training, then make your final 4-6 weeks of training before each target race-specific to that event. You also need to factor in an appropriate taper period prior to each target event, to get that ideal mix of fitness and freshness that can lead to a superlative day. Follow up each target event with a week of rest.

STEP 4

Complete a sanity check. Is your plan realistic? Do you have other metrics to judge the coming season's success apart from winning a single race? Are you going to be happy if you accomplish most of your goals? If you don't answer yes to all the above, you need to rework your plan.

Don't be alarmed if something forces a change in the season plan. That's called life. Get past your disappointment and adjust your plan and expectations accordingly. And try to appreciate the planning process; for many people it's almost as enjoyable as riding.

—JOHN VERHEUL

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