

## ON YER BIKE

It all started for me at a very young age, as a response to the often heard call “Jeremy, get outside and DO something, you are bored”. I would find myself in the shed looking around for fun things to go and do - my bike was always a top pick...

Story by Jeremy Cronin

I would get on “old bluey” and my imagination would race as fast as it could! It wasn’t until 2003 that I finally sat on a road bike and looked into the world of endurance sport. When I entered the half Iron Man in 2004 I knew I could do well in the swim and in the run, but I questioned whether I could ride 90km sitting on that skinny little seat with my skinny little legs! Of course I could! Needless to say, from that day to this, that first ride was the worst; the tires were so skinny, the frame weighed a tonne and the front wheel was out of line (from a hard life in the shed I guess?) which in turn made for scary descents on the hills.

I have now gathered a few thoughts and am out to entice you into the world of riding a bike, by sharing how great it really is for you. I cannot help but do my best to sell biking to those of you out there whose bodies are screaming out at you, whose knees have been tipped over the edge by the ski season, or by the impact of all that running. For those of you who may have experienced too many fast stops or starts on the netball courts, or any of a long list of other activities that can bring about painful joints, biking could be the LOW impact sport for you. Second to swimming, (and I am slightly biased about that) the benefits are endless. Here are some key things to get you going:

First of all you need a bike: beg, borrow, or steal one (did I advise that!) or just get on into your favourite bike dealer and find the bike that’s just right

for you and your needs. You won’t regret it! By keeping your training EXCITING you will not experience time dragging out. This part concerns you and how you think; the onus is on you. Find your favourite roads, detour around the roads that you dislike, create an adventure, and go out on a journey. One of the biggest challenges now that you are on a bike and riding is to change the pace and enjoy hill rides. Your body may tell your mind that this is hard and heavy work, but watch your strength, speed and fitness sky rocket after persisting on these things we now call FUN (hills)! Play around with the gears; spin fast up hills, spin heavy and slow up hills, mix it up and watch the improvements happen. It is all about quality of training and ensuring that every moment you are out on your bike you are being smart with your time.

For those endurance athletes out there who spend six hours riding, while I do believe that time on your bike has a fantastic place in your training and sets you on track for your events, I challenge you now through the week to go out and find a massive hill. Spend half the time on that hill, hard up, easy down and feel the change in those long rides happen. Once hills become your friends not every ride needs to extend to a million miles from your door step.

Start to get creative, make race loops around your streets and work on interval trainings e.g. 12 x 1min on @ 100%, 30sec off @ 70%. If you play around with short sharp bursts (30sec on 30sec off) with the same amount of

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recovery as you had working hard, then also play around with longer bursts and shorter rests e.g. 5min on @ 85-90%, 30sec off @ 70-75%. You will notice a change in your breathing capacity and have to really focus on working through that lactic acid build-up stage that always feels like hard work. Every time gets better, and while it never becomes easy the difference is that strength, speed and stamina will be much greater. I always recommend that athletes train with a heart rate monitor. An easy method to start to work with percentage and speeds is knowing your max heart rate (simply, 220 - your age = your max heart rate), then you can tell how the body is really coping with the workout; you can calculate your 75-85% heart rate from your known max heart rate and really use your training time smartly while following a specific program.

When you are working your body and really grinding those gears it is wise to reflect on the subject of nutrition. To keep it simple for now and to remain hydrated on the bike, have a camel pack or drink holder ready (roughly one bottle per hour). You can look into using a carbo shot to help sustainability and powders to keep the energy up.

However, prior to doing this talk to a few different retailers or athletes/friends who use a product and be sure to get the right one for you. Unfortunately, if they do not gel nicely with your body it can bring on an extremely unpleasant experience. Hydrate before and after and be sure to eat the right food from the right food groups. Use the internet to 'Google' a food pyramid if you need reminding what is of good nutritional value and what is not. Carbohydrates are necessary for long lasting energy, protein for great recovery and yet another source of energy. Be sure to be eating all those good fats so your body is happy and after all this, be sure to indulge in a treat as you will have earned it. All things in moderation, eh team!

So far, my focus has been on recreational and road bikers, well mountain

bikers this one's for you. Mountain biking is full of hills so separate the hills and make each one different; heavy gear, light gear, fast spin, slow spin, keep your hands flat on the handles so you're not pulling with your arms but using your legs and your strong core muscles. Try 360 degree peddling which means to push and pull through the full circular motion, play with standing and sitting, keep the bike still without the side to side sway and focus on the up and down pumping of the biggest muscles in your body; your legs. What goes up must come down so here's for the exciting part, be sure not to push past your capabilities or you may just find yourself wrapped around a tree or lying on the deck. Push hard and keep looking ahead for what's to come; commit to the descent if you have gone past the point of safely stopping. Because we all have different physical capabilities and our bodies are constantly being challenged and are always in the healing process, it is up to the individual how fast and hard the descent is taken. Use front and back brakes evenly and get in the groove so that the descents become fast, smooth and enjoyable.

The next coolest thing is that we can cycle all year round!!! For those who resist taking their road bikes out in the rain for fear of slippery and dangerous conditions; put on your wet weather gear, get on top of your mountain bike, away from the roads and dangerous cars and get some mud spitting off those wheels! Alongside feeling exhilarated and like a little kid again, the slipping and sliding should teach you great 360 degree peddling and confidence on your bike.

Be careful out there as cars are unforgiving and at times are not watching out for bikers; 'fluoro' gear, disco lights flashing on the front and back of your bike and you will be ready to spin your legs on the bike of your choice.

For more detail or advice on what you are or are not doing with your bike do not hesitate to contact me: [www.jeremyronin.co.nz](http://www.jeremyronin.co.nz) ■



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