

The Best Kept Training Secrets

BY RANDY BERNARD

Now that I have your attention, in the next three to four minutes we can discuss some of the best kept training secrets for endurance athletes. Have you ever wondered how some athletes emerge from fall and winter training seemingly in the best shape of their lives? How do they do it? Is it some special home gym, new ultra intense training regimen, or home altitude sleep chambers? Read on.

Ever heard of the “Fall Five?” It’s those five pounds that most of us gain during the winter months due to decreased physical activity, but increased caloric activity. It’s really closer to the “Fall Fifteen”, by the time you go through Halloween candy, Thanksgiving turkey (yes, please pass the potatoes) and of course the Christmas and New Years parties. Usually by March we start thinking about training again and the first question we usually get as coaches is, “Can you help me loose a *few* pounds that I gained this winter.” So now the first several months of training is to get right back to where you were before.

Let’s take a look at some key tips to avoid the “Fall Five to Fifteen” that will help make this fall and winter the best training period ever.

Change the focus of your training - The fall is a great time to reduce the intensity in your training and work on aerobic conditioning. Low easy heart rate exercise also builds your metabolic efficiency, which means burning more fat for fuel.

Take a short break - If you are burned out from training or racing during the summer taking a short break is fine. Usually about 2 weeks is more than enough for your body to repair those nagging injuries and leave you feeling rested.

Get involved with other sports - The fall and winter is a great time to try out a different sport. Maybe you can get involved with a running club, join a masters swim group, mountain biking, volleyball league, indoor soccer, basketball or something that’s different from your primary sport. “Variety is the spice of life”, actually I thought salt and pepper were the spices of life, but I remember hearing that somewhere. I guess I better stick to coaching and give up on the comedy.

Have your workouts be social events - This is a real key point for making it through fall and winter training. Misery loves company, so start planning your workouts with others. Group trainer rides in someone’s garage or bonus room, running clubs that have organized events, team adventure racing, weight training with a friend are great to do together. The accountability of meeting someone for a workout will most likely mean that you make the workout as well.

Consistency, Consistency, Consistency – Finally, and thanks for sticking with me for a few minutes, the real key to improving fitness is consistency. The stop-again-start-again approach to training is what keeps most people from really achieving their genetic potential.

As you can see there is not a magical answer to training and improving your performance. Even though genetics can play a part in how well you respond to training, having a plan and sticking to it will allow you to reach goals that were seemingly outside of your grasp.

So the “Best Kept Training Secret” is...sorry, I’ve have to go now, I’m late for a group run. Actually it’s in the paragraph above, but shhh don’t tell anyone, it’s a secret.

Happy Training,