

Junior Annual Training Mileage

During our report card session, Coach Kelli and I spoke about increasing the information flow. Education is a huge part of increased information flow. Here are some books that I recommend for the kids and parents to add to their cycling libraries.

The Cyclist's Training Bible by Joel Friel, VeloPress.

Note: When reading this book, especially the chapter on "Intensity", please realize that Joe's audience is adults, not youths and juniors. Most all of our juniors have not come close to their threshold of miles.

In the chapter on "The Training Year", Joe describes the number of training hours per year that are typical for successful racing per category. You may notice sort of a conflict for training hours/year per race category in his chart that includes juniors. Basically, he considers juniors as Men Cat 5. For juniors, Joe shows 200-350 annual hours (~3,400 - 6,500 annual miles); however, he shows 350-500 annual hours (~6,000 - 9,500 annual miles) for Cat 4; and 500-700 annual hours (~9,000 - 13,000+ miles) for Cat 3. Training hours for Cat 2 is 700-1,000 annual hours. This is where training years, available training time, and growth development are important for juniors. You can bet that those kids in the older age groups that we saw at nationals are training nearer to the category annual training hours than the juniors specified time. I believe that Joe's chart really illustrates what is typically necessary to compete in various categories. It puts things into perspective. In order for "normal" kids to compete at the highest levels, it takes a lot of coaching care.

For the most part, the growth development and maturity of juniors is not a part of Joe's consideration because he deals with training adults; however, in his chapter on "Unique Needs", Joe briefly addresses juniors and women. The few words Joe writes are important.

Other related topics

Bicycle Medicine by Arnie Baker, M.D., Fireside.

This book applies to all ages. Arnie has a short section specifically addressing kids and juniors, "Hints for Kids and Juniors".

Racing Tactics for Cyclists by Thomas Prehn with Charles Pelkey, VeloPress.

This book applies to all ages.

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On Wednesday, October 21, 2009, I provided a hand-out for juniors who will be 16 and older in 2010 and their parents. The hand-out contained a chart from "Serious Cycling" by Edmund R. Burke, PhD. The chart showed the average annual mileage for National level boys aged 16 to 18 and a range of annual mileages for regional boys aged 16 to 18. Most of you are aware that I have emphasized that increased annual mileage corresponds with improved performances. In addition to this hand-out, I sent a message to the parents that documented the annual mileages typical of Men Cat 2's, 3's, 4's, 5's, and juniors ("recommended reading for cyclists", August 24, 2009).

JR MEN 16 -18 - road mileages

TRAINING PERIOD			NATIONAL LEVEL	REGIONAL	
PREPARATION	NOV	Training Racing	534 -	401 -	347 -
	DEC	Training Racing	680 -	510 -	442 -
	JAN	Training Racing	740 -	555 -	481 -
	FEB	Training Racing	850 -	638 -	553 -
	MAR	Training Racing	1,045 -	784 -	679 -
	APR	Training Racing	1,040 540	780 405	676 351
COMPETITION	MAY	Training Racing	950 600	713 450	618 390
	JUN	Training Racing	850 650	638 488	553 423
	JUL	Training Racing	700 800	525 600	455 520
	AUG	Training Racing	550 1,000	413 750	358 650
	SEP	Training Racing	1,150 150	863 113	748 98
TRANSITION	OCT	Training Racing	100 130	75 98	65 85
			13,059	9,794	8,488

Edmund R. Burke, Phd, *Serious Cycling*

Increasing annual mileages will, in general, result in improved performances; however, there are many factors that must be considered such as training years, age and gender, the type of training, previous volume (mileage), time of year relative to the competitive season, school, and family obligations.

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Although, I have shown you the annual mileages for national class juniors and various race categories, I do not want the parents to think that we (the coaches) expect the members of our team to meet these numbers. It is a fact that none of the kids on our team approach the annual mileages for the upper race categories or the older national class boys. There are many reasons why they don't - it is not just a matter of commitment, it is mostly a matter of common sense.

We, as coaches, put a lot of emphasis on doing well at Nationals with our team and the parents. It is our goal for our team to do well. Honesty, winning national championships and medals does wonders for our business and our reputation as coaches! So yes, it is important for our team to do their best when matched against the best. When we show documented levels of training and racing miles, it may appear to the team members and their parents that we expect our team to train at the levels so that we can be competitive at nationals. But that's not our point - we show these numbers only for the sake of knowledge. If we assigned the workouts and rides necessary to attain these numbers, we wouldn't have much of a team because most would quit. There are more important long term goals that should not be lost and these goals are addressed by our program. For example, it is very important to keep our youth in the sport for a lifetime instead of the burning out before they have reached their physiological peaks, which usually happens by the mid to late twenties. It is more important to have our youth learn the skills of teamwork, to develop discipline, and a lifestyle for fitness and health. Winning is important and performing well is important, but staying in the sport is priceless. Our program is designed to get the most out of the kids within reason. We have diversity within our training program to keep things fresh. Our program may seem demanding, but it does not approach the requirements of cycling as a full-time job for our team members and we still have been able to get results on the national stage.

Currently, I am investigating what happens to USA Junior Road National Champions (17 - 18 age group) after their national championships. You would be surprised how many actually make it as professional cyclists. On the other hand, I am looking at the backgrounds of successful US Professionals. Again you would be surprised with their performances and their standings as juniors. Davis Phinney, Taylor's dad, was an outstanding US PRO, but Davis was not a top level junior, over time he worked up to being a world class amateur and professional racer. This situation is very typical among our most successful US pro cyclists... so if your child as aspirations of being a professional cyclist, keep this fact in mind and remind your child to do the same. Davis' number one rule for junior racers, "Diversify during your teenage years... There are many reasons for this, primarily to help keep cycling fresh and to avoid early burnout. The dropout rate is high among young cyclists, which is disheartening when you consider that cyclists peak in their twenties or later." Joe Friel, Elite Cycling Coach, advises for young cyclists to gradually increase their volume from year to year - "more is not always better, and often worse." He advises that juniors increase the number of races each year until the age of 18 when they can race as much as seniors. Joe Friel states, "When you begin to race, emphasize team tactics more than winning. Learn what it takes to break away, to legally block, to work with other riders in a break, to lead out teammates, and to sprint.... teamwork produces greater results than everyone riding only for themselves" Does this sound familiar? It should, because it is fundamental to Frazier Cycling's Junior Program.

Our program seriously considers the statements of Davis Phinney and the philosophy of Joe Friel and others prominent coaches combined with our own experiences. Our "Team Approach" for youth cyclists provides the teaching of racing fundamentals and skills, promotes fitness, offers diversity in training, and combats burn-out syndrome. We've seen kids leave the sport, but our attrition has been far less than the norm.

The 2010 season is in front of us. We expect to have continued success with our team. Hopefully, we can continue to improve our communication with team members and parents.