

Creating and nurturing a Youth Cycling Pipeline – Series 3

Youth Programming

This is our third article in the series ***Creating and nurturing a Youth Cycling Pipeline***. The topic is *Youth Programming: How to write a youth program and evolve it from individual to team concepts*. Frazier Cycling's Youth Cycling Team is, of course, made up of individuals; however, only a very few of a youth cyclist's training rides and workouts are individually based – by enlarge the rides, workouts, and practices are based on a group training program. To many readers and coaches, this may seem contrary to what is considered to be the best training for an individual. Many individuals may not be satisfied with a training program unless it is tailored for them. Indeed, you may hear claims of the “cookie cutter” training program will not work because it is not personalized to accommodate the differences among individual's physiology. This is likely true. Many adult cyclists, elite and non-elite, would be unhappy with a pure group training program. But when you are coaching youths and juniors, you are not dealing with little adults. When creating a training program for youths and juniors, you must keep this fact in mind. The obvious objective of a training program is to address the needs and wants of the individual. I suppose the suggestion that creating a training program that targets a group may be contradictory to that objective; but there are important considerations that must be taken into account when training youths and juniors.

In our previous articles, **Starting a Program** and **Youth Development**, we emphasized the importance of competency improvement, physical development, and social considerations for youth cyclists. These three ingredients must be given the highest regard when creating a training program for youths. We have found that all team members share a connection and they thrive on peer associations. It is our observation that having a peer age group and having fun are crucial for most youth cyclists to progress in this sport. As a result, creating a successful training program must address these elements. As a result, a training program must incorporate the social needs of the youth cyclist. Of course the obvious objectives must be addressed, too. Youth cyclists are not little adults, so while the training program must be challenging, it must promote continued interest, yield positive results (measurable improvements and successful outcomes), and provide fun with a peer group.

Here are a few considerations when creating a training program for youths:

1. The training program must correlate with growth, maturity, and physical adaptations of the youth cyclist.
2. The training program must incorporate a high concentration of competency and skill learning.
3. The training program must accommodate fun and friendships.
4. The training program must address year round fitness.
5. The training plan must include specificity for developing cycling muscles. Training that increases the ability for the muscles to adapt to changes in speed, cadence, and power over long periods of time – endurance training is paramount for this type of development.
6. The training program must provide ample rest and recovery must be incorporated – active recovery can include skill and balance training.
7. The training program must provide increases in intensity throughout the competitive season. Age and training years dictate the amount and rate of adding intensity to the youth cyclist's routine (refer to item #1).
8. The training program must consider the youth cyclist's family situation.
9. The training program must consider the youth cyclist's school situation.
10. The training program must provide a gradual increase in volume from beginning of the competitive season until the start of school. The school year dictates training volume as much as season goals.
11. The training program must consider the youth cyclist's other activities.

Goals Setting

The first priority for team members is goal setting. At a weekly practice before the beginning of our new competitive season, we ask each youth cyclist to list three goals for the upcoming year and for at least two goals for the next three years. We encourage the kids to involve their parents. Youth cyclists are not little adults, hence it is important to involve their parents because these goals easily become a family commitment. Be sure that the parents are aware that they must be involved with helping set their child's season goals.

For existing team members, we have historical references along with the necessary assessment data for each individual in advance of establishing the upcoming seasons' goals. The kids are very familiar with the process, their abilities and they have become proficient at goal setting.

Goal setting:

2 – 3 years: Long term perspective

Season: Short term leading to the long term

Examples of Season Goals

16-year-old boy	15-year-old girl	11-year-old boy
1. Category 2	1. 21-22mph 3.2 mile ITT	1. 9-minute 3.2-mile ITT
2. Top 10 @ Nationals	2. Help Brittney @ Nationals	2. Help the team in a race
3. 27 mph 3.2-mile ITT	3. Improve bike handling skills	3. Go to Nationals

Primarily, we concentrate on the season goals. The season goals define the individual's current needs and the appropriate training program. The long term goals help define the individual's future and possibly our training program's future growth.

The Foundation of the Training Program

The foundation of the training programs are based on season goals, long term goals, competency scores, and testing results. Using the season goals from each individual junior along with the considerations listed at the beginning of this article, we have found that grouping team members with similar attributes such as physical capabilities, competency, and social requirements has been a successful method for implementing our training program. For most of the rides and most of the time during practices, we will group kids with similar attributes. However for the best results, we have found that routinely regrouping kids with different attributes produces a number of benefits. We call this method of grouping: blending.

Benefits of blending:

- Promotes team role models and leadership
- Leads to team unity
- Experienced riders to demonstrate teamwork and cooperation
- Natural transfer of discipline, work ethic, knowledge, and example
- Establishes teamwork and discipline

After six years of coaching youth cyclists, collecting their goals, measuring their physical development, and assessing competency, we have created three training program options:

- Primary Program Option – minimal practices and rides for competitive training – typically ages 10 – 12
- Intermediate Program Option – practices and rides for serious competitive training – typically ages 13 – 14, initial National Team members
- Advanced Program Option – practices and rides for ultimate competitive training – veteran National Team and ages 15 – 18

These training programs were created as a result of individual goal evaluation and adopting the considerations listed at the beginning of this article. The content of these programs has changed over time, but the basic concept has remained intact. Programming continuously evolves based on the collection of individual's inputs and results. All of these elements influence changes to our group training programs.

Although growth and maturity vary among individuals, we observed there are three distinct categories for each Age Group: Beginners, Intermediate, and Advanced. We described these categories in Series 2, Youth Development:

The typical number of training years for:

- Beginner is less than 2.
- Intermediate is 2 to 3 years.

- Advanced is more than 3 years.

Youth Development directly influences how a training plan should be organized for the youth cyclist. Competency and physical development are extremely important elements that guide the training program. But just as important are the youth's goals. Regardless of how the youth scores compared to peers for age and gender with regards to competency and physical development, the youth's personal goals and personality goals can dictate the pace of the program. A driven individual with lesser competency and physical development will require a more demanding program than a lesser motivated individual who may exhibit high competency and mature development.

Here is an example of the number of weekly training workouts for each Age Group/Category.

Age Group	Beginner	Weekly training workouts	Intermediate	Weekly training workouts	Advanced	Weekly training workouts
10-12	Level 1	2 – 3	Level 1 & 2	3 – 5	Level 2	4 – 6
13-14	Level 1 & 2	2 – 3	Level 2	4 – 6	Level 2 & 3	5 – 8
15-16	Level 1 & 2	2 – 3	Level 2 & 3	4 – 6	Level 2 & 3	6 – 9
17-18	Level 1 & 2	2 – 3	Level 2 & 3	4 – 6	Level 3	6 – 9

Periodic monitoring of each youth's competency and physical progress (such as power testing or individual time trials) is necessary to acquire feedback that the training program is succeeding. At the same time, period monitoring of each youth's goals is just as important. These ingredients help coaches to make proper adjustments to the training.

Group Training Program Assignment

After obtaining the youth's goals (with the parents' approval), we agree to the type of group training program:

Generally, we set up a training plan for the team that covers two months. During the two month period, we assess changes/progress with the individuals' competency, physical development, goals, etc. We make necessary adjustments based on these changes for the individuals and the entire group.

Here is a chart that shows an example of individual training rides, practices, and testing (individual time trials – ITT). You will notice considerable overlaps and some differences among the team members. The overlapping practices do not necessarily indicate these individuals are in the same groups during the practices; however, it does not preclude these individuals from blending within groups on various occasions.

By looking at this chart, you may not be able to discern the training program for each individual. There are many cross over workouts, rides, and practices between training programs for age groups and training years. Primary Program members, Intermediate Program members, and Advance Training Program members frequently attended the same rides, practices, and workouts. An obvious reason for this overlap is to provide the appropriate training, but a secondary reason is to disguise any hierarchy that may be perceived by the youth cyclist or parents.

Name	Mon.	Tue.		Wed. ¹		Thu.		Fri.	Sat.			Sun.		
	Hill Repeats	LT-20	Laps	LT-20	6:30	LT-20	Gary's	LT-18	FB 50	11:30	3:30	FB 50	30 Miller	3:30
Abigail	R		R		R ⁴					R	R	R ³		R
Justin	R				R					R	R		O	R
Jonathan	O		O		R					R	R	R		R
Stephanie	O		O		R					R	R	R		R
Alexander	R				R					R	R		O	R
Nick	R	R	R	O	R ⁴	R	R	O	R	R		R		
Zoe	R		R	R	R ⁴		R	R	R	R		R		
David	R	R	R	O	R ⁴	R	R	O	R	R		R		

Melissa	R		R	R	R ⁴		R	R	R	R		R		
Adi	R				R				R	R	R ³			R
Nina	R		R	O	R ⁴			O		R	R	R		R
Teja	R		R		R ⁴			O		R	R	R		R
Brittney	R		O		R ⁴			O	R	R		O		
Brody	R		O		R ⁴			O	O	R	R	O		
Hodges	R		R	R	R ⁴		O	R	R	R		R		
Fletcher	R		R	R	R ⁴		R	R	R	R		O		R
Hunter	R	R	R	O	R ⁴	R	R	O	R	R		R		
Shoshana	R		R	O	R ⁴			O	O	R	O	O ³		
Wagner	R	O	R	O	R ⁴	O	O	O	R	R		R		
Rishi	R				R					R	R		R	R
Philip	R	O	R	O	R ⁴	O	O	O	R	R		R		
Diana	O				R					R	O			R
Connor	R				R					R	R			R
Ben	R		R	O	R ⁴		R	O		R	R	R		
Dominique	R		R	R	R ⁴		O	R	R	R		R		
Matt	O		O		O				O	O	O	O	O	O
Russell	R		O	O	R ⁴		O	O		R	R	R ³		O
James	R		R	O	R ⁴		O	O	R	R	O			
Sam	R		R	O	R ⁴		O	O	R	R		R		
Alex W	R				R					R	R	R ³		R
Ethan	R ²		R ²		R ²		R ²			R	R	R	O	O

R = Required

O = Optional

²Ride or practice alone

³or 30-miler on Sunday

⁴or motor pacing

¹WEDNESDAY 5/27, 6/17: 3.2-mile ITT - **Everyone is required to attend. Parking: 2399 Lawrenceville Highway, Lawrenceville, GA**

New Members – Goal setting and programming

To this point, I have discussed how we create and assign group training program for existing members. The process is slightly different for new members, but ultimately new members fold in with the existing team members.

Whenever a new youth joins our team, goal setting is not initially performed. Prior to goal setting, we conduct competency and physical development assessments. Additionally, we evaluate the interest level of the new member. Often with new members, our coaches make suggestions to the youth cyclist and parents with regards to goals. Most times new members are unfamiliar with the sport and what are reasonable goals. As coaches, the new members and parents rely on our expertise in this area to get started. We will assign the new members to various groups until they are acclimated. Normally, these new members will be started in the Primary Program, but occasionally, we will agree to start them at the Intermediate level. After a few weeks with the team, the kids and parents readily pick up the details and they will develop an understanding of where they fit and then we ask for their goals with the same process that is used by existing members.

For more information contact us about our "Coaching Juniors - The Team Approach" Clinic and manual.
www.fraziercycling.com, 770-513-8640.