

## THE CYCLING HANDBOOK:

Welcome to the cycling handbook. This mini E-book will cover the basics of cycling nutrition, Gym based training and on the bike training. I hope you enjoy the content within it.

Feel free to check out my blog entries, articles and videos on my website for more useful content to aid your cycling and health.

Starting off with nutrition then. Let's go into the basics of pre/during and post ride food:



### NUTRITION:

Cycling, on or off road is a sport where you will use up A LOT of calories. It is constant work, turning the legs and using your upper body to power the bike forwards or over obstacles that are in your way.

Due to the high calorie demands of cycling you will naturally be able to eat more food (its one of the reasons I love it so much). But you want to be eating the right foods to fuel your efforts. So, what are these?

#### Pre:

Before going out on a ride it is important to eat at least one hour before. Taking in some good slow release carbs like oats, rice or potatoes. You also want to get a little bit of protein in your system too from foods like milk, yogurt, meat or beans. When going out on the bike try not to consume too much salty food and try not to consume foods which are stodgy and heavy on your system like red meats. These will sit on your stomach and make you feel uncomfortable and sick while you are riding. Some good examples of pre ride foods are:

- Oats with milk or an alternative.
- Oats and yogurt.
- Mackerel or tuna with rice.
- Jacket potato with a little bit of butter, with tuna and a bit of mayonnaise.

All foods which have an adequate supply of protein, fats and plenty of carbs in there to Fuel your ride.

While food is important pre ride. Hydration is also paramount. Being hydrated before you ride the bike will prevent you from nailing all your water in one go. And will also make your body more awake, alert and ready for the day of pedalling. I try and drink at least 3 pints of water before I go on the bike. That way all the old water is flushed out of my system and I am topped up with fresh, clean water.

Caffeine is also a regular pre ride drink for me but remember this can lead to dehydration so ensure you are drinking water with this.

Caffeine can increase your alertness and is a stimulant so if you ride early. Can be very useful.

### During:

During rides little and often is a popular theme to stick to. Both with hydration and with food.

On the road bike I try and eat every 20 miles, on the mountain bike it is every 10. This is usually because MTB rides are shorter (typically). So be prepared for the duration and distance of your ride and make sure you carry enough food with you. With regards to your food it is partly personal preference. But there are a few general guides to stick to.

You want to consume foods that have carbohydrates in them, and some sugars to keep these levels topped up. Fast acting foods like bananas and Soreen. I know some people take jelly babies with them, but I don't see the point. For me they don't provide enough calories.

One thing to avoid: If you stop for coffee and cake mid ride don't overindulge. I have done this before, and it ruined me for about 20 miles of the ride. So be wary of that.

Here are some good examples of foods to take with you:

- Soreen.
- Bananas.
- Homemade peanut butter flapjack.
- Homemade flapjack with jam in it.
- Banana bread.

Plenty to choose from there. Moving onto hydration then. It is important that you stay hydrated and. Especially in hot conditions top up your salt levels. You can buy electrolyte tablets, but I prefer to mix my own drink of a small amount of fruit juice (orange) with 4 grinds of salt and then water in a 500ml bottle. If I am on the road bike, I will take 1 bottle of this and 1 bottle of water. On the mountain bike I will take the electrolyte drink.

Little and often, remember that phrase:

### Post:

After a long ride it is tempting to go crazy and smash some high calorie food. I have been there and done it. And it hurts. Take some time to let your body relax, settle and then get some food in you. Remember you burn A LOT of calories cycling so you can indulge a little bit but don't over do it and remember you have taken a lot from your body. So, you need to refuel it with some good protein, fats and carbs. I try and make nice foods post ride but also want to keep them marginally healthy. Here are a few of my favourites:

- Bean burgers (or regular) with homemade chips.
- Jacket potato with homemade beans (passata, beans and mixed herbs).

- Mixed bean salad (include some chicken too) with rice and spinach.

I am no stranger to a post ride maccies. If I visit a trail centre, I am known for looking for the closest one. But do try and get some good protein and water in your body after you have ridden.

I am also partial to coffee and a cake as well after a ride (maybe too partial).

Remember. You burn a lot of calories on the bike. So, you can afford to treat yourself after.

One thing I do not advocate is alcohol post ride. Especially if you have some riding left to do or driving home.

Your body has just become dehydrated and hungry as you have expelled a lot of energy. Drinking after a ride can be dangerous. Give yourself time, get some food in you and some water and then by all means enjoy a beer.

That concludes the nutrition segment of this book. Let's get into the training aspect of cycling:

### TRAINING:

Training and cycling go hand in hand. Developing your body in a way that is specific to cycling will increase your climbing speed, decrease your risk of injury and most importantly, make it more enjoyable.

Training for cycling isn't about getting massive muscles. It is about developing the body and increasing the quality of its movement. It is about becoming more supple and able to move with flow and ease. This section of the handbook will look at three ways you can train your body to be better on the bike.

#### 1: Get strong:

The first topic I am going to cover is the simple matter of being strong. Having a strong physique can build up your body's tolerance to stress (riding, training, crashing, repetitive strain). Having a bit of muscle on you can also provide you with a sheet of armour.

There is a popular saying in rugby which is "Muscle is the best body armour". While cycling doesn't require anywhere near as much muscle mass as rugby you could still benefit from having a degree of mass to your body.

Look at the cross-country guys now and even the roadies, they have started to gain a bit of lean muscle mass as the benefits are out there to see.

So, get yourself a good strength programme and work on building up a strong body. This is one way to improve the chances of not being injured when you crash.

#### 2: Get mobile:

Mobility, something that a lot of us overlook but arguably the most important component of a strength and conditioning plan. One example of this out of the cycling world would be Ryan Giggs. Suffering from back problems in the early years he soon took up yoga, this elevated the pain and he went on to carry on playing top flight football, for one of the best teams in the world in his 40's!

Mobility is key for sports where any collision is possible as the more mobile you are, the more your body can move in the event of a crash. Going over the bars is a key example of this. Going OTB and falling in a funny position can really damage joints like the shoulder and elbow. But if you are mobile, there is more movement in that joint. Whereas stiff people will land, and something has to give. 9/10 it isn't the ground that gives in that situation.

Adding some basic stretching and yoga into your training can be incredibly beneficial to your body and it is so easy to source. PINKBIKE even has a series of you tube videos specifically for cycling.

So, don't neglect your body. And mobilise!

## 2: Recover:

Again, another key component of fitness here. Recovering your body after a ride or training session is key. When we train or ride, we damage our body and deplete its energy stores. If we don't repair them and maintain them, they will eventually break.

Think of your body as a bike. If you ride it long enough without checking it, washing it or maintaining worn parts then eventually something on it is going to break. Usually it's a mech, or a snapped chain. These are costly to fix financially. If your shoulder was a mech it would be equally as costly to fix. But the currency would be time. Time away from your bike, time spent recovering and rehabilitating your shoulder.

Take good care of your body by recovering after your rides and training sessions with good food, stretching and even using hot baths (after half an hour) to get more blood to the muscles and increase the amount of oxygen they get.

There is also evidence for and against ice baths but that is for another day.

Ice on an injury however immediately after exercise is great. So, if you do have a knee issue, or an ankle issue get some ice on it after a ride and decrease the inflammation.

You also recover when you sleep, getting 8 hours of sleep a night is paramount. Lebron James tries to make sure he has 10 hours of sleep a night. While he is a professional athlete he can. But Regular humans can get at least 7-8 hours' sleep a night if they are serious about taking care of their body.

So, after all the gym training then when are you actually going to ride your bike? Or, how do you make your riding more effective as training while you are on the bike.

The next section will look at developing your riding.

## RIDING:

Firstly, riding bikes should be fun. You should be allowed time with your mates as that is why we got into riding bikes in the first place right? Enjoyment. But what if you find enjoyment in taking your body and mind to dark places and giving yourself a beating on the bike? Or what if you want to work on your slow speed skills? This next section will cover three ways to improve your riding skill and fitness:

### 1: Skill:

Becoming a more skilful rider is something we all deep down want to do. But there are ways of doing this more than just riding the bike. Investing in some good quality coaching for one, especially with jumps and drops. Another good thing to do is set small slow speed obstacle courses up in your garden, local park or trails and work on your slow speed bike control.

Or copy the likes of Sam Pilgrim and mess about with your mates, play games of bike and roulette with small challenges. Fun, but you're also learning how to control your bike at slow speed while having some banter. What could possibly go wrong! (for when it does go wrong remember the advice above).

## 2: STRAVA:

Strava is a great app (even now you have to pay) for developing your fitness and the route planner that it comes with is absolutely brilliant for on and off-road riders. Planning routes allows you to include specific climbs, or flat sections of riding if that's what you want to work on. Maybe you know a specific ride that is your ideal training loop that you want to track your time on. There are tonnes of possibilities with the Strava app that allow you to track development.

I have started using this A LOT with my clients, planning them routes, tracking their average speed, and climbing on rides and checking their progress on the bike. It has really made things interesting!

## 3: Hill sprints:

The classic way to get fit. Hill sprints have been around for so long for one reason: THEY WORK.

It's simple, (not so) easy and do able for anyone.

All you need is your bike and a hill.

Warm up on your ride to the hill, power up the hill X amount of times and then rest for 60-90 seconds. Repeat this however many times you wish and use your ride home as a cool down.

It will get you fitter on the hills and will also make you feel like your ride has been a tough one.

Cycling is one of those sports where people regularly think that getting fitter just means riding more. While there is some truth to this. Training in a variety of ways is more fun, and more beneficial than just riding your bike. As is fuelling your body properly for long days out.

I hope you have enjoyed the content in this e book. For all coaching enquiries view my website at [www.adamcopleypt.com](http://www.adamcopleypt.com) or email me on [accopley11@gmail.com](mailto:accopley11@gmail.com).

It would be great to work with you.

Thank you for reading.

Adam.