

The 7 Commandments of Training

Richard Flambard

Have a read, these I followed last winter.

If you're an endurance athlete, for example, there are seven key things you must do to perform at your very best. You must:

1. Expand your VO₂max (maximal aerobic capacity) to the greatest possible extent, so that your body becomes a huge energy-creating machine. As your capacity to process oxygen swells, your ability to exercise without fatigue increases dramatically, and the difficulty of various movement speeds decreases. To put it simply, you can cycle, swim, run, row, skate, or ski further and faster.

2. Increase the strength of your muscles and connective tissues, because doing so fortifies your body against injuries and thus allows you to train and progress without unplanned interruption. Becoming stronger is also the first step on the path to improved economy (see goal no. 5).

3. Lift your lactate threshold (LT) to the highest-possible level. LT lift-offs increase all of your race paces and make it possible to move at faster-than-ever speeds without fatigue.

4. Maximally pad your power. Optimizing your power means not only developing greater force with your muscles - but also learning to exert that force more quickly than usual. Power means faster, more explosive movement - a quicker trip from start to finish of your races; it matters not at all whether your competitions last four minutes or three hours. Of course, one way to augment your average power output is to simply boost VO₂max and lactate threshold, but developing maximal power also requires the utilization of special training techniques which increase your muscles' amount and rate of force production.

5. Become as economical as possible. Being economical means having Honda efficiency, even though you have a huge, 'Rolls-Royce' exercise motor (VO₂max). Remember that possessing a great VO₂max is synonymous with having an expanded heart, as well as muscles which have the capability of processing incredible amounts of oxygen, while being economical means moving along at decent speeds while your heart is still pattering along moderately and your muscles aren't forced to gear up all their oxygen-processing capacity (e.g., even though the movement speed is high-quality, you're 'operating' at only a modest fraction of your VO₂max, giving you lots of 'room' to pick up your pace without exceeding your oxygen-handling potential). And of course being economical means beating the pants off your fellow competitor, even though that rascal has a similar VO₂max, because you can cycle, swim, or run at the same race pace as him at a lower fraction of your capacity, making the speed feel easier to you.

6. Restore yourself regularly and systematically, healing the muscular, connective-tissue, nervous-system, and endocrine traumas which are the natural result of hard training, and thus permitting further hard work and a relentless approach toward your

ultimate goal. This restoration would include one prolonged period each year during which your body totally refurbishes itself, making far more than the minor repairs required between workouts.

7. Develop specific endurance. It's not enough to be a physiological thoroughbred, with good VO₂max, LT, economy, strength, and power in a rested body. You must also develop the ability to function smoothly and efficiently and with minimal fatigue at your goal speed - the one that will take you to a PB in your key competition of the season. Research has shown us, for example, that a runner who is economical at six-minute per mile pace MAY NOT be economical at seven-minute pace. If that individual wanted to run a marathon at seven-minute tempo, he would have to devote part of his training time to functioning at that specific intensity in order to become economical at that pace.