

INTRODUCING McKEOWN COACHING

Barracuda member Mark McKeown has recently set up a business offering bespoke coaching. Here we take up Mark's offer to try out his service.



It is a well known truth in triathlon that most time can be made up on the cycle leg of our sport, which invariably represents a generous 50% of time spent competing. This is good news for those from a cycling base, but makes for grimmer reflection for those of us, like myself, whose limit of pre-triathlon cycle life were spent on hire bikes at various visitor attractions. As a result my cycle sections turn into a prolonged and psychologically bruising experience, each aerodynamically enhanced competitor passing me a hammer blow into the coffin of my competitive ambition. A situation made worse by my somewhat stronger swim leg which invariably sets me jostling amongst the more serious competitors i.e. the stronger cyclists.

In short, my cycling, despite some 3 years of gradually increasing training efforts, remains woeful and in some need of improvement. So it was with some alacrity that I seized on the offer which presented itself when communicating with Mark McKeown, who has just set up a cycle/sport consultancy business, giving advice and training programmes for those amateurs who wish to improve their performance. Mark was offering to test my current cycle performance and provide some tailored feedback and training programme to help me.



Set Up

So it was that a few weeks later, and battling through the snow-which has made outdoor cycle training virtually impossible over December, I found myself in Mark's house, where he has established his business. This follows a 3 year sports science degree and an ever increasing interest in all types of sports performance. The whole session is done on your own bike but on top of a Computrainer turbo (<http://www.computrainer.co.uk/>) which Mark has invested in and which has a vast range of options, from the basic measures of power, speed and pedalling efficiency through to 3D interactive versions of well known triathlon cycle stages. All of my readings appeared in both the standard monitor attached to the front of the bike as well as being transferred to the laptop screen which Mark monitored.

Testing

We started with a short warm up before quickly moving in to a ramp test, gradually increasing resistances for a period of around 10 minutes. At 150 watts talking is comfortable, but 10 minutes later and around 260 watts of resistance, I found it a challenge to even splutter. Mark watches the results and checks the heart rate. Next we did a sprint test, an all out effort for 6 seconds. I was probably a bit slow off the blocks here, but must have increased quickly because Mark commented that I ramped up the power and intensity quite quickly leading to a peak reading of 743W. This however probably affected the high intensity tolerance test which came next and which involved cycling as hard as you can for as long as you can, though apparently the machine sets the resistance corre-

sponding to one's initial burst, and as I obviously have some speed off the mark, the resistance must have been set for quite high. As a result I quickly found my legs immersed in fast setting treacle and so only managed 35 seconds.

I cooled down by spinning lightly and that concluded our session. Two days later came the session feedback, a comprehensive 4 page assessment of the specific results e.g. peak aerobic power, estimated anaerobic threshold, followed by general comments about the test (fair degree of aerobic conditioning, (but could be better), and good level of anaerobic), and the training suggestions. Not only were these ideas broken down into different sessions based around length, heart rate and power output, but importantly they took into account my limitations in terms of time (I can probably only manage to actually be 'in the saddle' about 3 hours a week). They also took in consideration my objectives for the year (I've put myself down for a crack at the Steelman in July), Mark's recommendations therefore centering around improving my aerobic

power i.e. working longer at lower intensities.

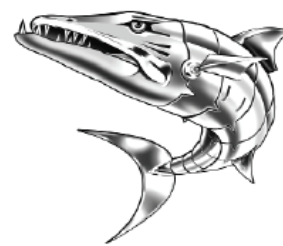
I'm looking forward to trying out some of the sessions, particularly



trying to work within certain heart rate zones, which I think will correspond more accurately to real effort compared to the wattage/power recommendations which I think probably won't be replicated so well on my more modest turbo.

Extras

Mark is also dipping his toes into supplement retail and as a result I left with a bagful of goodies designed for pre, during and post event consumption. More details are available on his website www.mckeown-coaching.co.uk.



As a keen racer, Mark has also taken his interest to another level by forming a cycling team to compete in local and national events. Working with Hawthorn Avenue based climbing centre and cycle store We Love Mountains (www.welovemountains.com), Mark has recruited 10 keen triathletes and cyclists (including some Barracuda members) to ride on a range of Orbea road, MTB and TT/Triathlon specific bikes over the coming season.

Needless to say, I wasn't invited to be part of the team, though I'm hoping that following some of Mark's suggestions and programme, I will at least keep this type of cyclist visible on the horizon this triathlon season, rather than out of sight beyond it.

Contact

For more information about McKeown Coaching, see www.mckeown-coaching.co.uk or ring Mark on 07599452771.

