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THE EARLY ADOPTERS

As I sit here at my desk, wondering what to write about training with power, I think about all of the things that have changed over the past 10 years in this arena. We have gone from a very small group of “early adopters” that had big bulky gray power taps, with all kinds of issues, and no real way to analyze more than one file at a time, to having multiple companies with reliable and excellent power meters, pictures of pros in almost every cycling magazine with a power meter on their bike and sometimes up to 50 percent of local racers using a power meter daily. It’s been a real shift in the way all cyclists and coaches have thought about training. No longer do coaches write about heart rate zones so much and plan out workouts in heart rate. Your heart rate has now become as important as it was supposed to be in the first place: a

secondary measure that you watch, keep an eye on, sometimes use for pacing or for when to rest, but not the first essential measurement of your effort nor what you build your entire training program on.

Downloading your power meter has become all too important now as well. The information from each ride, whether an easy recovery day or a big epic ride, is vital to you and to coaches so that you can really see what impact your past rides are making on your current fitness or freshness levels. Analyzing your ride in a software package like TrainingPeaks WKO+ makes the difference between having an expensive toy and having a real tool on your bike with which to help you improve. Learning what “mean maximal power” means and what your “power profile” is can really be helpful as you move

forward in your training. It's not only the software that analyzes all the numbers that's important as your interpretation of the data displayed by the software. Software like WKO+ can display graphs and charts all day, but if you do not understand what it means, then you might as well be counting flowers on the wall.

Thinking about all that has happened in the past makes you wonder about the future and what lies ahead for the "computer assisted training" revolution? In the near future, probably actually the present, by the time you read this, we'll have a power meter mated with a GPS device. While I am not sure how a GPS device will change the way that I plan training for athletes or develop a training plan, it can help a coach know the terrain that an athlete trains on. GPS is exciting also in the fact that we'll eventually be able to overlap the same rides from different people and see visually where the faster rider gets ahead of the slower rider. On the computer screen, you'll see the "dots" race each other, and where the first "dot" pulls ahead, will help to understand just exactly what that rider did to pull ahead and what could the second "dot" do to keep up in the future! GPS also just has a really fun "wow" factor that helps you to re-live your ride, which can sometimes provide you with additional insight later.

Along with GPS, there are some new power meters in the mill and the big deal is that they will be wireless units. All of these new wireless power meters will be using the ANT+SPORT 2.4GHz communication protocol, which is particularly exciting as it allows power meter computers using this protocol to just talk to each other in a common language. What does this mean to you the cyclist? Well, essentially this will allow you to use whichever "head unit" you like, with whichever power meter you like. You could have a SRM crank and use an iAero (read on for more info on the iAero) as the head unit, or you could have a Quarq CinQo and use an SRM head unit.

On the GPS side of things, the Garmin 705 unit will work wirelessly with the new Quarq power meter, called the CinQo, and the 705 will also work wirelessly with the SRM wireless power meter. Garmin is new to the power meter computer world, so it should be exciting to see how this develops and what additional features they bring to market. One issue with a GPS computer, along with

power, heart rate, speed, cadence, data, etc., is that it makes the downloaded file very large. I'm not sure how this is going to impact things, but it definitely could be a concern for those of you using slower PC computers at home. Right now, on the software side, the Trainingpeaks WKO+ program is the only software program compatible with the new 705 file, which is exciting, but at the same time means that Garmin needs to step up their pace in order to handle data issues.

The other exciting thing to come out this spring is what I am calling the "poor man's" wind tunnel. Getting in the wind tunnel is not only expensive, but it's time consuming and there are only so many times a year these wind tunnels are open to cyclists. If you had an easy way to test how aero your position was or wasn't without having to fly across the world, then that would be a really handy product! Well, it's been done by the smart guys at iBike. They have taken the iBike and re-branded it, now calling it the iAero, made it ANT+SPORT compatible, and now will display real-time CdA (coefficient of drag), along with displaying in seconds and minutes how much time you will save by improving your position while you ride. This really makes the iAero a "poor man's" wind tunnel. Since the iAero can read true power from either the Quarq or SRM, it will be able to do some very good calculations and come up with drag coefficients. This should be very exciting as I can imagine being in a breakaway and each time you take a pull at the front, you ensure that you are in the most aero position to save energy while driving the break even faster. Of course, for

the time trialist, the iAero is going to become an indispensable product, as it will allow the rider to quickly test the difference between many different positions and aero gear.

From the training perspective, I know that we will continue to learn more about predicting performance and getting better and better at making sure "form" develops right when you want it to. At the same time, I have a feeling that there will be some exciting developments in teaching riders to become more efficient in their bike handling skills and technical abilities.

Computer assisted training has really helped us improve over the past 10 years and it's hard to imagine where we'll be in the next 10 years. One thing is for sure though: There is no substitute for hard work! *🌀*

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