

## **Holding Summer Form ALL Winter**

### **By Mitch Anderson**

Forget the miracle pill or diet...it's the same old problem every year. You spend six months training, racing, getting ripped to within an inch of your life and then winter happens! "Too cold today. Too wet today. Hmmm...pass that donut can you my pretty?!" Come October, you're a butter ball and have to get back onto the track for real! So how do you maintain that summer form all through winter? First, you get yourself a solid retreat on the Sunshine Coast, Queensland. Ok, that's a bit rich, let's say you head off to Colorado or Hawaii? Kidding, lets keep it real for the masses.

Assuming you're stuck in your current residence, with the same family, job and life. We have to make a list of goals for maintaining form. Break it back to the basics: swim, bike, and run in the sub-sets of endurance, strength and body mass.

#### **First principle is Endurance:**

On the whole, the best way to maintain endurance is to maintain the same rate of training all year round. This is not always possible, so I like to think about holding key sessions for the winter period. Each discipline should be approached in a similar way.

Swim: Pick your longest set for the summer, and reduce it by 10%. Try and do this session once a week, every week. The key is not to miss a session on any week. If you only swim once a week, at least you will maintain the neural pathways of a long set. That said, frequency is the mainstay of swimming well...so try and get in often for short swims (aside from your key session). That way, you'll only have to do your head in once a week in the pool.

Bike: Again, pick your longest summer bike, but reduce it by 25%. Try to do this session every second weekend. But here's the kicker, look at the weather every Wednesday. If it looks fine, do the long one. If it looks average, do a shorter ride (50% of longest summer ride). Do not skip a ride because of the weather. If you don't have a jacket, buy a good one OR invest in a fancy wind trainer. I prefer the former option- you never know when it'll rain on race day, so you might as well get used to it (also, a jacket is cheaper)! Do a longer ride every weekend it is good weather. Swap a Saturday with a Sunday if you can get better weather. This will see your endurance maintained all winter. Try and fit 2 shorter rides in the week.

Run: Pick your longest run for the summer, and reduce it by 25%. There is no excuse for not doing this every week, whatever the weather. Running is a heat generating tool and it doesn't take that long. You should always do your long run once a week- no excuses! Take it slow, and build that aerobic base. No-one is timing you, so set PB's for lowest heart rate for same run time if you can. Rug up for another couple of 50% or 60m runs a week.

#### **Second principle is Strength:**

Strength is gained and maintained by stressing your muscles (a principle called overload). You can do this in the gym or be sports specific. I like getting in the gym on the crappier days and just for a change of scenery. I like the strange looks from the schwarza types, I can see them thinking, "Who invited the puny dude with the funny tan, his whole look is bringing me down. Argghhh...best I just look at myself in this mirror again...oh, yeah." You know the types. So ignore them, and do a strength session over lunch. It should only take 45 minutes. Don't forget to go to fatigue on the abdominals.

Swim: Try using pool buoy and bands (B&B) on your short sessions. Fill up the arms with lactate by doing power pull with the B&B. For those uninitiated, essentially that's breaststroke arms only. Try skulling for strength too (feet forward is best).

Bike: Single leg cycling is a great drill for strength and technique. Try 100 revs each leg by five, every twenty minutes on the trainer (or road) to break up a boring ride. Try and avoid listening to the headphones too...concentration is an important element of this exercise. Use gym sets including squats (double leg), heel raises under load, quads/hams over fulcrum, short seated row and leg press. Get someone who knows to show you how to do them properly.

Run: The long run will help maintain strength, but some specific gym work never went astray. Focus at all times on your vastus medialis oblique (VMO), the little bit of muscle that overhangs your knee-cap. It is crucial for healthy knees. Single leg squats over a step are great, as are bent knee heel raises. The latter can help to prevent stress fractures and shin splints. Heaps of abs too...I firmly believe you can do 20 minutes every other day to keep the physio away. Finally, don't forget to warm down properly post training- calf, hamstring and quad stretches are vital.

### **Third principle is Body Mass:**

Rather than approach this from sport specific point of view, I'll be general. Don't worry about putting on some puddin' in the winter. It is completely normal and it is helpful for a number of reasons. Keeps you warmer is the most important one. Means you float better in the pool. Acts as a limiter of weight gain. You release a hormone (leptin) from your fat cells which tells your brain to stop eating...so a few more is helpful, but not a lot more. As with anything, moderation is key. Being a blimp in October will not be helpful, but being hard on yourself all winter to maintain 5% body fat will not be of assistance either.

The only aspect I haven't mentioned is keeping buff by going to the salon for tanning and waxing all winter. Every 6 weeks, I like going to Merlene at the Happy Waxers in Prahran to keep my kini and tan lines looking svelt. She's also my analyst, so we talk some mental health too. And if you believe that, you'll believe anything!!! Good luck over the winter, stay on the track for your key sessions and stay out of the tanning salon! Check out [www.mitchanderson.com.au](http://www.mitchanderson.com.au) if you have questions or interested in race reports all winter!