

HOW TO TRAIN IN WINTER

By Jean-Baptiste WIROTH*

When the winter is here, it becomes difficult to practise cycling in the open-air. It is therefore necessary to change its practice to activities more adapted to winter conditions.

The home-trainer

The home-trainer is a particularly interesting tool to continue pedalling indoors. The main interest of the home-trainer is to make qualitative and non quantitative sessions.

A typical session:

The aim: developing a maximal consumption of oxygen (VO₂max)

The content: Start by 20 minutes of progressive warming up and do 2 series of 8 accelerations of 30 seconds at your maximal aerobic power at a rate between 100 and 110 rpm. Between each effort, take 30 seconds of active recuperation without forcing on the pedals. Recuperate 4 minutes between the 2 series. Finish the session by 10 minutes of pedalling at low intensity.

Running

Running is a particularly interesting activity. It is an excellent exercise for the heart as well as on a muscular basis. Running should ideally be practised on resilient ground to limit traumatic constraints.

A typical session:

The aim: gaining muscular power

The content: Start with 20 minutes of progressive warming up and do 8 to 10 times 15 seconds of accelerations in stages. Recuperate by walking back to the starting point. End the session by 10 minutes of jogging at a low intensity.

Body work

In winter, it is particularly agreeable to force at home or in a "gym" when the outside elements are unleashed. Body work offers multiple advantages, notably for cyclists lacking muscular force.

A typical session:

The aim: Developing force

The content: Start by 15 minutes of progressive warm-up on a home trainer and do 3 series of 5 times (10 bending at half-squat / 10 inclined push-ups / 5 bending on the left leg alone / 5 bending on the right leg alone / 5 minutes of home-trainer in endurance). End the session by 10' of pedalling in suppleness.

Swimming

Swimming has numerous advantages notably that of reinforcing breathing while performing muscular strengthening of the back and shoulders

A typical session:

The aim: Developing the breath and a maximal consumption of oxygen

The content: Start by 300m of progressive warm-up by alternating crawl and breaststroke then do 10 times (25 m quick crawl followed by 25 breaststrokes in active recuperation).

Nordic skiing

The practice of Nordic skiing has many common points with cycling, notably for the heart. Besides, the fact of being in altitude allows developing muscular oxygenation mechanisms (red cells, enzymatic system).

A typical session:

The aim: improving endurance

The content: do a hilly course of 1h30 while remaining in respiratory ease

For those who wish to continue practicing cycling outdoors in spite of difficult environmental conditions, some advice can be formulated:

- It is first of all fundamental to cycle with adapted clothing equipment. The application of the concept of three layers is completely recommended: 1 breathable technical underwear + 1 intermediate insulating and breathable jacket + 1 breathable waterproof wind-stopper or gore-tex jacket. At the same time, the protection of extremities (feet, hands, head) must be optimum.
- Furthermore, when it is very cold, it may be interesting to perform a pre warm-up on a home-trainer before going to cycle outdoors. In order to do so, it is necessary to equip yourself as if you were going to cycle outdoors (thermal jacket, over - shoes, winter gloves, helmet), then climb on a home-trainer and cycle some ten minutes equipped as indicated. When the temperature rises and that perspiration begins to be felt, it means that the machine is ready to go outdoors! NB: pedalling on a home-trainer can be replaced by a series of flexions and push-ups.
- Once in action, it is necessary to cycle in a qualitative way by doing a work by intervals. In nutritional terms, drinking a warm energy drink is inevitable; the medium dosage is 500ml of drinking per hour of effort.
- On returning from effort, it is necessary to take a shower and to get changed quickly. The consumption of a recovery light meal is necessary to restore energy reserves and to favour physiological adaptations.

Fatty mass and resistance to cold

The study of human or animal populations living in glacial environmental conditions shows that the reserves of subcutaneous grease are a good protection against the cold. Effectively, the subcutaneous adipose cloth allows limiting heat losses and constitutes a supply of significant energy potential for situations of famine.

Except enthusiasts of extreme polar or Himalayan expeditions, cycling lovers at winter sports will seldom have to confront situations of famine. Nevertheless, it is not uninteresting to take a few pounds during the off-season, by watching out however not to exceed the threshold of 5% of one's normal weight.

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