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Here's 10 of the most beneficial mountain bike specific workouts I've used for my clients. It is extremely valuable to me as it is my go to list for getting my clients to the podium every year. The workouts work extremely well when used in a well designed training plan.

The Training Zones are based off Joe Friel's HR Training Zones and the FTP percentages for Power are based off Functional Threshold Power (i.e. multiply your FTP x the percentage to get the exact zones).

The duration of the workouts should be specific to the distance you are getting ready for. I.E. if you are getting ready for a hard, short, 2 hour XC race, then you should focus more on 2 hour hard/high intensity efforts. If you are focusing on a 100 mile mountain bike race, then you need to make your primary/key workouts longer in the range of 4-6 hours every 1-2 weeks.

Enjoy the workouts and keep working hard on the bike!

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Mountain Bike Trail Specific Workouts: mix of workouts that are trail and race specific.

Works on combo of trail work, technique, converting power to speed on the trails, and overall power production in the trails.

30 minute Race Pace Practice on the Trails

Today is meant to practice and nail down your race day routine: warm up just as you plan to on race day and ride your race bike today.

Follow your race day warm up.

Then ride a section of trail similar to your next race. Ride this section for a constant 30 minutes at your expected race pace for your next race. This shouldn't be a maximal effort for 30 minutes.....it should be an effort you think you can sustain for the entire race! Practice flow, and practice everything you plan to do at your next race.

Finish the ride riding in zones 1-3 at a fun pace.

40-90 minute Tempo on the Trails:

Ride mainly Zone 1-2 for 30 minutes. Follow this with 40-90 minutes building to Zone 3. Do this section on the trails working on flow at a moderate effort. This effort level should feel like a "fun fast pace". If you are breathing hard, then drop the pace down a tad bit. Increased breathing rate should be noticeable, but not hard, RPE 5-6 out of 10. Rest of time ride in Zones 1-2 with most of that time in Zone 2.

MTB starts (2 repeats with 5 practice starts per set):

Warm-up well.

Then do 5 x 20-30 second max effort start practices. Take 2-3 minutes rest between each of these.

After your 5th start go all out for 1 minute. Without stopping, settle in at HR 4-5a zone for 15-20 minutes. Recover 15-20 minutes and repeat entire sequence 1 more time. This is best off road on a course which simulates the start of your next race

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Easy Recovery Workouts: these should be done on your recovery and easy days. Add the pedal stroke work to gain power all the way “around” the pedal stroke.

Easy ride with 90% one legged drills

Ride Zones 1-2 only today. Within the ride include 20 minutes of one legged work, where one leg does 90% of the work while the other leg "loafs". While performing this drill, attempt to push your toes to the front of your shoe at the top of the pedal stroke, and scrape dirt off your shoes at the bottom of the pedal stroke. Attempt to eliminate all dead spots and become more efficient!

Zones 1-2 spin: steady and consistent

Ride primarily in Zone 1-2 today. Steady and consistent ride

Endurance Building Workouts: these rides work on building your aerobic ability which both increases your aerobic capacity/ability to go longer distance, and can also improve your recovery times between workouts and races. These rides can really help with your fitness if you have the time and should be a stapleton of your “Base” phase if you are able to put the time in. The main focus of these rides should be increasing your total duration, time you ride, every week by about 10% for your key rides.

Ride 50% Zone 2 Endurance Ride

Ride Zones 1-2 today. Get 50% or more of the time in Zone 2.

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Threshold Building Workouts: threshold is extremely critical on the mountain bike. These workouts should be done continually throughout the year to maintain and/or build threshold

4-6 x 10 min Sub LT Power with cadence changes

Warm up 20-30 minutes easy spinning.

Then perform 4 x 10 minutes at 85-95% FTP (if using HR build up slowly from low zone 3 to mid-high zone 4 for each effort). Take 3 minutes rest between efforts.

Intervals 1,3,5: cadence is 85-95 rpm

Intervals 2,4,6: cadence is 65-75 rpm

Finish the workout with easy spinning zones 1-2 only.

LT Intervals 1-2 x 20 criss cross

Warm up well with 20-30 minutes of spinning and 3-4 x 60-90 second accelerations to Zones 4-5.

Follow this with 1-2 x 20 minute intervals building up to Zones 3-4. Within each 20 min interval criss cross from Zone 3 to Zone 4 every 2 minutes. Take 15 minute rest between intervals. Finish off with easy spinning in Zone 1 only.

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VO2max / Pmax Workouts: high end power production workouts. These are very important to start performing about 6-8 weeks before your first race. They are very very important for power production in singletrack. These workouts should be performed on race specific, very steep, singletrack and/or steep climbs. If you don't have climbs, use high resistance such as a heavy head wind while sitting up on your bars. These also should be on our race specific bike as often as possible.

2 min intervals: 4 repeats+

Warm up 30 minutes.

During this warm up include 4 x 60 second accelerations to expected pace for your 2 minute efforts. Then perform 4 x 2 minutes at Zone 5 (120-140% FTP). Try to pick a section of road or a short climb for these. Mark a point that you think you can hit every 2 minutes and equals a max effort for that time frame. Hit that point every time in 2 minutes and you are spot on!

If you have anything left after 4 of these, do one more maximal effort with whatever you have left. Today's workout is a maximal day, so leave nothing left.

Take a full 4 minutes rest between these efforts. This is extremely important, so do your best to take the entire break.

After the intervals, spin easy zones 1-2 for the remainder of time.

4 x 4 min maximal efforts

Warm up 30 minutes. During this warm up perform 4 x 60 seconds at your projected pace for the 4 minute intervals. Take 3 minutes rest between each of these efforts.

Then perform 4 x 4 minutes at zone 5. Take 4 minutes rest between efforts.

If you have anything left after the 4th interval, perform one more effort but only if you feel you are still producing good power. Otherwise call it a day and head home.

After the intervals, spin home easy zones 1-2.