

Week 4

Note – week 4 used to be week 5 in the original plan so apologies if there's still any references to it being week 5!

This week is your recovery week. I usually programme these every 3-4 weeks. If you would prefer to have your rest week in sync with the worst days of your menstrual cycle then feel free to move it to then.

A rest week doesn't mean no training, far from it! It just means we shorten some of the sessions/ take out the intensity.

Session 4:1 – Position on the bike and getting aero

Session plan:

- Ride easy for a few minutes.
- Then practice some high cadence spin ups (holding the same low power, but building leg speed)
- 20 secs high cadence, 40 secs easy self selected cadence x 2
- 30 secs high cadence, 30 secs easy self selected cadence x 2
- 40 secs high cadence, 20 secs easy self selected cadence x 2
- Ride easy

- Then practice a 'micro-burst' - 8-15 secs at a higher cadence *and* power.
- You can repeat these through today's training session, allowing at least 5 mins of recovery between each micro-burst. Limit to no more than 15 secs per burst, 6-8 bursts per training session, and limit this type of training to once a week.

- Through out the rest of the session, try out the different aero positions detailed below

Goal: Get free speed – go faster for the same effort by i) Holding an aero position ii) Having a range of different aero positions to use iii) being comfortable on the drops (for descending as well as aero)

Overview: Whilst people spend hundreds on bikes and wheels to make them faster, by far the biggest thing that slows you down is your body and its position as you cut through the air. The more aero we can make our body position, the faster you'll go for the same effort.

For each interval you're going to practice different hand and body positions. For each, hold it as long as is comfortable, return to your normal (good) position for a rest (still holding power), then if you feel able, return back to the aero position. Whilst the aim is to create an aero position, there's no point in being aero if you can't hold the power so practice your position and build up to holding it for longer periods each time.

Notes:

- If you don't have drops then you can still get low (if Wattbike use aero bars, if hybrid etc then just get low and think about minimising frontal profile)

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- If you're not interested in aero profile or don't have a bike with drops etc then just hold Z2 ride. But see the section at the end on bike fit and descending.
- Don't spend too long in aero position, it might feel fine now but you're using very different muscles so give your body time to adapt. Today only hold as long as you feel comfortable. When you take it forwards in future work outs, try for e.g. 1 min aero, 1 min easy and then build up from there

Main set:

- Start off on the hoods, check your position is good by mentally scanning through the body. This is the position you'll come back to, make it good!
- For each of the following aero positions:
 - o Focus on getting low, keeping your elbows tucked in and minimising the surface area on the front of your body and associated drag (known as Coefficient of Drag Area or CdA).
 - o Ensure you're sitting on your sit bones and that your pelvis and back are in a neutral position rather than either rounding through your upper back to reach the handlebars or over-arching your lower back as you push your hips back.
 - o Ensure you're relaxed in each position, if you're tense then you're wasting energy and cancelling out the effectiveness of the position.
 - o Pay attention to make sure your power isn't dropping too much, if it is, come back up to the hoods for a rest and then try the bars again. Use subsequent work outs to build up the time you can hold in more aero positions. (NB in reality your power will probably be slightly lower in an aero position but you make up for this by cutting drag and can reduce the drop by training in this position more).

Positions:

- 1) On the drops – this is a good position to practice for being aero, as well as for descending and cornering safely.
- 2) Hands resting over the hoods. This shouldn't feel as aggressive a position as the drops, but it is still effective at minimising air resistance. This is a good cruising position to hold in a race, especially if you don't have aero bars.
- 3) Aero bars with your hands out on the bars in front (you'll often see pros riding with wrists resting on the bars, wouldn't really advise this given lack of control over the bike)

Bike fit and refining your aero position

In my experience women have far more issues in this area than men, but whatever your gender, don't suffer in silence. It takes a bit of time to get used to sitting on the saddle if not used to it, but it shouldn't be sore.

If it's because of saddle sores (due to increased sweating and less changing of position) then shower straight after training, try chammy crème and try antibacterial wash (and don't shave) -

<https://www.theguardian.com/sport/blog/2016/aug/15/team-gb-cycling-saddle-sore-medals>

If it's soft tissue then try tilting saddle down (just few degrees). A hard saddle is better than soft, some people prefer a cut out nose.

Once you've got general position sorted, turbo is great for refining aero position. Can try filming yourself (especially as you tire over the ride) if you want to check on it.

If you're still having pain look into a bike fit (if you're racing tri then ensure you see someone who understands tri, it's not just about being aero on the bike leg, but minimising the compromise on your hip angle which impacts the run, some bikes have an adjustable seat post for road riding vs triathlon).

* As Phil Burt, lead physiotherapist of the Great Britain Cycling Team and author of *Bike Fit: Optimise Your Bike Position for High Performance and Injury Avoidance*, explains: "A road bike and a TT position won't be compatible unless you make a few more adjustments than simply clipping on a set of aerobars. "Your normal riding position has to be rotated forwards for an effective aero tuck but without stretching you out too much and compressing your hip angle. The seat angle and top tube length on most road bikes make this hard to do. You'll probably need to move your saddle forwards, maybe fit a seatpost that steepens the seat angle and obviously adjust your saddle height to accommodate these changes. At the front end, you'll also probably need to consider a shorter stem to reduce reach. Once you have the position right, it's then essential that you train in it and don't wait until race day."

Replication in the real world

There's no point in having aero bars if you don't use them, which means you need to train with them and be able to handle the bike. And there's no point in having the bars if you break position to drink and eat or come back off them every time it gets a bit technical or have to slow down too much round the corners or down the hills.

If you're new to bars, start somewhere easy without much wind, a good road surface and not many corners or descents, then build up from there. And learn your limits, you won't go faster if you crash!

And remember there's no point in spending ages refining your aero position and then riding along with things flapping. People spend a lot of money on wheels and aero frames but generally it's you (your body and frontal profile, helmet and clothes, that make the biggest difference by far).

Group riding with aero bars

Different clubs and organised rides have different policies on this. Generally it's not acceptable to ride on the bars in a group because you're further from your brakes (some will allow it if you're at the front). But check with those you're riding with (some clubs will insist you actually remove the bars). If doing an organised sportive / race etc read the conditions carefully.

If removing your bars make sure you note your set up first so that you can replicate it when you put them back on.

Descending

We've mastered effective climbing technique and riding aero on the flat, but what about descending?

There's less we can practice on the turbo, but the main thing for descending, is being comfortable descending on the drops. Not only does this make you more aero, but it gives you far more control over the bike by lowering your centre of gravity and meaning you have better control over the brakes.

If you're not already comfortable descending on the drops then the more time you can spend riding in the drops, the easier it's going to feel when you get outdoors.

Other things to consider for effective descending:

- Get down on to drops/stay low (so can keep centre of gravity low and cover brakes)
- Body position (tuck in for speed/ out wider to go slower)
- Gears – you will be in an easy gear after going up the hill so ensure gears are ready for exit
- Keep scanning the road for obstacles, but look at the line you want to take, not what you want to avoid otherwise you'll probably find yourself riding into them!
- Practice going as fast as you can whilst maintaining adequate control
- Cornering:
 - Go into the corner with appropriate speed
 - Leg position: Unless the corner is shallow enough that you can keep peddling, press all your weight down into the outside foot (foot at 6 o'clock), inside knee up. This ensures greater traction with the road and prevents your inner pedal clipping the tarmac as you lean into the corner. If you find it hard to remember which leg, imagine you are skiing/ boarding down a hill and think which leg would be on the outside, and visualise pressing your weight into that outside leg.
 - Be prepared to use the whole road and choose your line: approach the corner with best line of visibility and smooth off the corner (often this means moving out into the middle of the road, check it's clear before pulling out)
 - Look where you want to go i.e. look at the exit of the corner and beyond, not where you don't want to end up (ensure heads, shoulders, hips point in the way you want to go to exit the corner)

Session 4:2

I've added in a video covering sports psychology tips and tactics (what I would now refer to as mindset!)