

BEN FRANKLIN CAN HELP YOUR SEASON

Sometimes athletic training, teaching & salesmanship can all be intertwined. We are all an accumulation of our life experiences, including school, parents, work and almost every activity. If you have participated as a racer, coach or even as a fan you have probably noticed that no rider wins everything. The usual pattern of success appears to be cyclical going typically from top ten to top three to winning & then back to top ten. This performance pattern is highly individual of course. Peaking is a whole subject for science, coaches & athletes and really not what this discussion is about, except to accept a couple of premises (called writers "cop out"). We will be working with the understanding that peaking can be done multiple times during a season & that peak can only be maintained for a bout three weeks (or destroyed in a day!).

Lets bring Ben Franklin in to help out in the management of the season. One of the techniques in salesmanship for closing the sale is to do a "Ben Franklin" with the customer. Here the salesman poses a question to be put on paper which is answered either yes or no. A typical question here might be: Is 11 cents a day too much to pay for all this education?. Its very handy to put a Ben Franklin to work for you in managing your training and competition. This is using yes or no questions & paper to identify areas for improvement and methods to be used for making improvements happen. Cycling officials are trained to gather the evidence before making a judgment call and the athlete must gather good information before coming to conclusions. In this case, the athlete or coach becomes the both the salesperson creating the questions & the customer answering the questions. You will find much the same approach used in the troubleshooting sections of software books. This use of a Ben Franklin is a good way to pin down an evaluation process, YES SELL ME THOSE ENCYCLOPEDIAS AT ONLY 11 CENTS PER DAY.

Now lets get down to some real Q&A The idea about making this use of a Ben Franklin is not to convince anyone about a conclusion already done but to expose where training or racing behavior may have gone astray. Here goes on a list of some questions to keep a season on plan-- whoops! -- First question:

Am I on my plan?
Is my weight fluctuating?
Do I sleep well?
Am I monitoring my heart rate effectively?
Is my race kit prepared?
Am I managing my diet?
Have I reviewed my equipment?
Do I have an objective for each training ride?
Are my training events part of a larger plan?
Is my equipment suitable?
Is my strength consistent?
Do I have a plan to test strength?
Do I have a plan to test power?
Do I set race objectives?
Do I set training objectives?
Is my race warm-up effective?
Are my race skills competitive?
Am I communicating with my coach?
Do I ask questions?
Do I eat during races?
Do I maintain a race/training diary?
Do I review my race/training diary?
Do I know the important events?
Am I punctual & on time?

The process is simple-- discover the negative & provide a positive solution. The process is much like the salesman who says to himself "if in doubt, ask a question". This is like this article, asking yes-no questions to keep the coach & athlete constantly communicating & improving.

Poise is a very good word Check the first question about being on plan. If the answer is no & you have a plan, review it, fix it & make it your security blanket. If you don't have a plan then you are subject to frequent non productive anxiety. Anxiety is an energy waster who is a lousy teammate. Take a look at that list again & you will find questions that if answered with a "no" imply that some simple action can lessen wasteful anxiety & enhance personal control.

To test or not to test that is the question --- well not really. One cannot make any team or grade or job or even write articles for publication without having been tested in some way. It just makes good simple sense to do some regular test to keep a season on plan. Tests do not have to be complicated, just appropriate to what is wanted. A Kilometer TT makes a good strength test & a Kilo at the beginning & end of a training session can show a consistent level of muscle fitness or not. A 10K or 20K TT is a good power & speed indicator but only if repeated for comparison & records kept . If there are no records or sparse records than its like drawing a conclusion from little or nothing, as in fallacious reasoning. A single 14 minute Power Test doesn't necessarily mean repeatability everywhere.

The above notes were never intended to be a detailed plan to keep a racing season strictly on plan. I do hope that a suggestion about an approach such as using a "Ben Franklin" & raising some simple questions will provided a method & approach for keeping the rider on plan and on form for the best of race success. If in doubt ask a question and use a "Ben Franklin".

Questions will be answered.
Phil Sanders
philipsanders@compuserve.com