

Should You Train Tired?

I'm sure you've been in the middle of a workout where you've felt very fatigued and wondered if you should push on with your workout or quit and rest up for the next workout. As with most topics, I can come up with arguments both for and against. Let's look at both sides. There are probably situations where you should quit and others where you should keep going.

NO, stop training:

- The most common reason I hear for stopping training when you are fatigued is because you don't want to train yourself to ride slowly. Let's say you are doing time trial intervals and part way through, you get fatigued and your speed drops to the point where you are below race pace. You could continue to train at a speed below race pace, or should you quit once your pace drops below race pace? Part of me wants to believe that we shouldn't train at sub-race pace speeds. What good does that do us? With power meters, it's now easy to determine your race pace power output. Let's say you can crank out 300 watts (W) during a time trial. When your intervals fall to 280, you are training yourself to ride at 280 W when your goal pace is 300 W. Aren't you just training yourself to become better at 280 W? Or let's say you are doing sprint intervals and your goal is to be able to sprint at 35 mph. Once you do several and can no longer hit 35 you probably want to quit because your objective is to train yourself for a given speed. Again, don't train yourself to go slowly.

- A really good reason to quit training when you are tired is when the fatigue is systemic and not just leg muscle fatigue. If you were up half the night with a new baby, had a hectic day at work and now are trying to ride intervals and you just don't have it, trying to train at race pace when you can't even get to race pace probably isn't going to do you any good. So evaluate your fatigue. If you are tired because you are doing a killer workout, you might consider continuing, but if it is because you are just generally fatigued due to life's pressures, you might consider resting so you can get in a quality workout tomorrow. A good sign that you are fatigued is when you are yawning before or during your workout.

- Another good reason to quit is when you feel you have chronic fatigue. This may be due to riding or racing hard for several days in a row. Going out and trying to train after subsequent days of hard riding may just be digging a bigger fatigue hole. Overreaching could lead to overtraining. If you have been training hard and your legs are sluggish from the start of the ride, you might give it a try but if the legs don't come around after the first couple of intervals, then hang it up for the day. Again, it doesn't do a lot of good to train if your legs or body aren't prepared to put out the effort. Also, if you don't feel motivated, are getting sick of training or otherwise just aren't enthused about training, you may not get much benefit from training and it may actually do more harm than good. Listen to your body but don't just accept what it tells you on the surface. Try to figure out what type of fatigue you are feeling. If you are tired but feel you can train with gusto then go ahead. But if you are drained and this workout is going to make you more drained, then give it a rest.

YES, keep training:

- You have to race when fatigued so you should train when fatigued. This is a good argument. If you quit training whenever you get fatigued, you won't teach your body or your mind to push

through fatigue and to keep working even when your legs say 'stop!', just like in a race. Let's consider the cause of fatigue. If your legs are tired from doing intervals, they have built up lactic and other forms of acid which are making them burn and making it harder to put out a good hard quality effort. But one reason you do intervals is to build tolerance to these acids, and there are intervals called 'lactate tolerance intervals'. These are hard intervals with short recovery periods in between. Lactic acid used to get all the blame but it appears now that it's just the acidic environment in the muscles that causes the burn. But the purpose of these lactate tolerance intervals is to teach your muscles to keep working even when they are burning. So yes, you should keep doing them even though your legs are tired. That's the whole idea with this type of interval. So when doing Lactate Tolerance Intervals, keep pushing through the fatigue.

- Train your brain. Just as important, maybe more importantly, than training your legs to work through fatigue is to train your brain to push through fatigue. You don't like pain and it's hard to make yourself hurt more when you are already tired and hurting. But if you want to built mental strength to push through the pain in a race, then you need to train for it. If you always quit training hard when you get tired or when your legs start to hurt, you may develop a tendency to do the same thing when the going gets tough in a race. I'm not saying to always keep pushing, but make sure during some workouts you do push through the fatigue and pain to teach your brain to keep on going. Group rides are particularly good for this as it creates a race-like environment and you want to keep up with the group even when you are tired.

So what do you do? First, evaluate the type of fatigue. If it is fatigue due to life's stresses or chronic fatigue from high levels of training or overtraining, you are better off resting that day and coming back fresh the next ride. If the fatigue is due to the workout you are doing that day, you might consider continuing if you want to train your head and your body to push through pain and fatigue. But if you have a specific speed goal and you can no longer reach it, you may not want to continue the workout. Evaluate your situation and try to determine if training will help or hinder your long term progress.

Watch for my new book coming soon – 101 Cycling Workouts. I'll let you know when it's available and will offer loyal Cycling Update readers a special discount!!!

Free Annual Cycling Training Plan, \$49 value, details inside.

101 Cycling Workouts



Improve Your Cycling Ability
While Adding Variety to your Training Program

David Ertl
USA CYCLING LEVEL 1 COACH

Ride on -- David Ertl

David Ertl is a USA Cycling Level 1 (Elite) Coach and NSCA Certified Personal Trainer. He coaches individuals interested in improving on their current cycling ability, whatever level that may be. He also provides cycling training plans and ebooks at his website: www.CyclesportCoaching.com
He can be contacted at Coach@CyclesportCoaching.com