

DO I NEED A POWERMETER?

BUYING A POWERMETER IS THE SINGLE BEST INVESTMENT YOU CAN MAKE IF YOU WANT TO IMPROVE YOUR TRAINING AND RACING IN TRIATHLON. IN FACT, IT WILL HELP YOU TRAIN BETTER AND RACE FASTER THAN A NEW ZIPP DISK WHEEL FOR ABOUT THE SAME AMOUNT OF MONEY. THIS BECOMES TRUER THE LONGER THE DISTANCE YOU PLAN TO PARTICIPATE IN.

SO, IN MY OPINION, YOU NEED A POWERMETER WITH A VERY BIG IF: *IF YOU KNOW WHAT TO DO WITH IT*. SOME FOLKS SPEND \$1500 (AND UP) TO HAVE A VERY FANCY AND BASICALLY USELESS COMPUTER ON THEIR BIKES, BUT HEY, THEY LOOK COOL.

SO WHAT DO YOU DO WITH A POWERMETER? BASICALLY, A POWER METER DISPLAYS DATA, PRIMARILY IN WATTS, STORES THAT DATA AND THEN ALLOWS YOU TO DOWNLOAD THAT DATA INTO VARIOUS PROGRAMS. YOU CAN USE THAT DATA IN 4 WAYS : 1) SET TRAINING ZONES (IN ADDITION TO HEART RATE ZONES) AND PERFORM WORKOUTS AT THAT TARGETED POWER LEVEL; 2) MONITOR THE TOTAL AMOUNT OF WORK PERFORMED IN TERMS OF BOTH DURATION AND INTENSITY; 3) EASILY SHARE WORKOUT INFORMATION WITH YOUR COACH; AND 4) PERHAPS MOST IMPORTANTLY, ACCURATELY MONITOR YOUR PACING DURING A RACE.

- 1) **SET TRAINING ZONES.** MOST FOLKS REALIZE THAT TRAINING ON A BIKE WITH A SPEEDOMETER IS PRETTY MUCH USELESS, SINCE SPEED IS TOO VARIABLE DEPENDING ON WIND AND HILLS. TRIATHLETES HAVE TYPICALLY USED HEART RATE ZONES INSTEAD OF SPEED TO MONITOR INTENSITY. HOWEVER, WHILE BETTER THAN NOTHING, HEART RATE ZONES ARE AT BEST AN INDIRECT MEASUREMENT OF EFFORT AND CAN BE TOO VARIABLE BASED ON DIFFERENT CONDITIONS. AND FINALLY, USING HEART RATE ZONES FOR SHORT INTERVALS (LESS THAN 5 MINUTES) CAN PROVE TROUBLESOME. FOR EXAMPLE, LET'S SAY YOU HAVE A WORKOUT ASSIGNED AS FOLLOWS: 5 X 3 MINUTES AT ZONE 5B (VERY HARD). WHEN YOU START YOUR INTERVAL, HOW HARD DO YOU GO? SINCE YOUR HEART RATE LAGS BEHIND YOUR EFFORT, ANY WHERE FROM 45-120 SECONDS, YOU MIGHT BE HALF WAY THROUGH THE INTERVAL AND YOUR HEART RATE IS TOO LOW IF YOU START TOO EASY. OR IF YOU GO OUT REALLY HARD AND YOUR HEART RATE SHOOTS PAST 5B, YOU MIGHT HAVE TO GO TOO EASY TO GET YOUR HEART RATE BACK DOWN. HOWEVER, IF YOU USE WATTS, AND ZONE 5B IS 275 WATTS FOR YOU, YOU CAN MONITOR YOUR EFFORT EXACTLY. YOU KNOW EXACTLY WHAT YOUR EFFORT BASED ON POWER IS THE ENTIRE INTERVAL. YOU CAN THEN USE YOUR HEART RATE AS AN INDICATOR OF HOW YOUR BODY RESPONDED TO THAT INTERVAL.

- 2) **MONITOR WORK DONE.** ONCE YOU COMPLETE THE WORKOUT, YOU CAN DOWNLOAD THE DATA INTO ONE OF TWO GREAT PROGRAMS, RACEDAY OR CYCLINGPEAKSWKO. THESE PROGRAMS WILL ASSIGN A TOTAL STRESS SCORE TO EACH OF YOUR WORKOUTS BASED UPON YOUR INDIVIDUAL FITNESS LEVEL. IN THIS WAY IT IS EASY TO MONITOR HOW HARD A

PARTICULAR WORKOUT WAS IN COMPARISON TO YOUR FITNESS LEVEL. IT WILL ALSO ALLOW YOU TO MONITOR HOW “FRESH” YOU ARE AND HOW “FIT” YOU ARE. THESE ARE GREAT PROGRAMS TO HELP GUIDE YOU TO A PEAK FOR AN A RACE.

- 3) **SHARE THE DATA.** AS OPPOSED TO JUST TELLING YOUR COACH THAT YOUR WORKOUT WAS “PRETTY GOOD”, SEND THE POWER FILE TO THE COACH. THERE IS A TON OF INFO THAT A COACH CAN GLEAM FROM A POWER FILE. WAS THE WORKOUT TOO HARD OR TOO EASY? DID THE ATHLETE DO TOO MUCH OR TOO LITTLE? DID THE ATHLETE PACE HIM OR HERSELF CORRECTLY? HOW DID THE ATHLETE RESPOND TO THE WORKOUT? ARE THE TRAINING ZONES APPROPRIATE? THE LIST GOES ON AND ON. YOU WILL GET MORE OUT OF YOUR COACH BECAUSE YOU WILL BE GIVING YOUR COACH A WHOLE LOT MORE TO WORK WITH.
- 4) **RACE PACING.** WITHOUT A DOUBT, IF YOU USE THE POWERMETER AS DESCRIBED ABOVE, YOU WILL RACE BETTER AND FASTER. A POWERMETER WILL HELP YOU ACCURATELY PACE YOURSELF IN A RACE, PREVENTING YOU FROM TOASTING YOURSELF ON THE BIKE AND FADING ON THE RUN. THIS IS ESPECIALLY TRUE IN THE LONGER RACES. BY THE TIME RACE DAY COMES AROUND, YOU WILL KNOW PRETTY ACCURATELY WHAT TARGET POWER YOU CAN HOLD IN A STEADY FASHION AND STILL RUN WELL OFF THE BIKE. IF FOR EXAMPLE YOU ARE DOING A 70.3 RACE, YOU MIGHT KNOW THROUGH YOUR TRAINING AND WORKING WITH YOUR COACH THAT YOU CAN HOLD 250 WATTS FOR 56 MILES AND STILL HIT YOUR GOAL RUN PACE. ALL YOU HAVE TO DO IS MONITOR YOUR POWERMETER, TO MAKE SURE YOU ARE NOT EXCEEDING YOUR POWER GOAL FOR THE RACE. I CAN’T TELL YOU HOW MANY TIMES I HAVE SEEN AN ATHLETE GO OUT TOO HARD ON THE BIKE (HEY WE ALL FEEL GOOD ON THE BIKE AT THE BEGINNING) JUST TO LIMP IN TO T2 AND STRUGGLE ON THE RUN. PROPER PACING PREVENTS THIS AND POWERMETER WILL ALLOW YOU TO PACE PROPERLY.

AND, BY THE WAY, A PROPERLY OUTFITTED POWERMETER IS EVERY BIT AS FAST AS A ZIPP DISK WHEEL FOR ABOUT THE SAME AMOUNT OF MONEY. SEND ME AN EMAIL AND I WILL TELL YOU HOW.