

Six power meter sessions to help boost bike strength and speed



With power meters now commonplace in the cycling world, we share six sessions that will help you get the most out of yours by helping you find your peak power zone, measure your fitness and optimum race pace, build leg strength and more.

First though, a quick explainer of the various terms involved...

PPO: peak power output, defined as max average 1min power output in a progressive test.

Watts per kilo: An athlete's average race or peak power data compared to their weight (for example, 3.5w/kg Kona bike).

HiIT: High-intensity interval training, which is done at somewhere between 85 and

92% of max heart rate.

OK, with that out of the way, let's get on with the sessions!

Find your zones

Warm-up

Very low effort warm-up <80-100w for 5mins.

Main

Start the test at 100w. Increase 20w every minute until exhaustion.

Results

Take the peak HR to determine Zone One (60-80% of max) and Zone Three (above 86% of max). Use peak 1min power to approximate race-day pacing: Ironman (50-60% PPO); 70.3 (55-65% PPO); Olympic (60-70% PPO); sprint (65-75% PPO).

Measure fitness

Warm-up

Very low effort warm-up <80-100w for 5mins.

Main

Start the test at 100w for 3mins to establish a stable HR. Then increase 25w every 3mins. Go to around 85% of maximum then cool down.

Results

Compare to previous data to see if you're absorbing, tired or lacking training.

Measure your form



Warm-up

Steady. For example, 15mins in mid-Zone One.

Main

Ride 20min indoor or road time-trial. At around 88-92% HR (or 80% PPO). Record average wattage, HR, cadence and distance. Alternatively use local 10- or 25-mile road time-trials (see www.ctt.org.uk).

Results

Provides a race scenario in which to assess what power you can sustain and how good your pacing is.

Long speed intervals

Warm-up

Steady. For example, 15mins in mid- to upper-Zone One. Then 3 x 6secs fast efforts over the next 5mins.

Main

6-8 x 5min intervals at 80% PPO (around 90% HRmax) with 3min rest intervals. Twice per week for just three weeks – don't do similar sessions for swim and run during the same period.

Results

Look at subsequent bike and run split ability (after a one-week taper) as it should improve both.

Race simulation

A power-based simulation to teach you how to sustain your desired effort (or not), using various courses and each year's data to make your race-day pace judgement



more refined. Use the data from 'Find Your Zones' to estimate pace as well as previous race power and HR data. You must also feed at race levels if you're to sustain the effort, especially 70.3 and above. Plus, it assesses your race-day input capabilities.

Very hard HIIT for peak biking power (three-four weeks maximum)

Warm-up

Steady. For example, 15mins in mid- to upper-Zone One. Then 3 x 6secs fast efforts over the next 5mins.

Main

3mins at your hardest effort possible with a full 6min recovery. The aim is to do eight but these are incredibly intense, so start with four and build up at the rate of one additional one a week. Cool down with at least 15mins very light riding.

If you're doing no other bike or run intervals, do this twice per week and continue for three-four weeks maximum. Record your average wattage, HR, cadence and peak HR per interval after each session.

Result This is a threshold-boosting session that should increase in work from week one to four. You're then a week's taper away from a peak bike split.

(Images: Jonny Gawler)

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