



## Planning Your Season And Setting Objectives

This is the time of year when we begin to dream of longer days and warmer temperatures. It is also a good time to begin to plan your cycling season, and setting objectives helps you to stay on track. Try to avoid the very general objectives like “I want to get fitter” or “I want to lose some weight.” Those types of broad and unquantifiable objectives are doomed to fail.

We break down the season into more manageable pieces and apply sound training principles with 3 types of objectives to ensure a positive result. The 3 types of objectives are **Outcome, Performance, and Process**.

- It’s best if you keep the Outcome objective to just one. The more Outcome objectives you have the less likely that you will achieve any of them.
- Performance and Process Objectives should be quantifiable.
- Intermediate Process and Performance objectives will keep you on-track towards your Outcome objective.

**Outcome Objectives** wouldn’t be anything if there wasn’t some sort of reward and this can be intrinsic or external. Most of us respond better to external rewards. A new jersey, new handlebar tape, a nice dinner out without restrictions, or dream big with an overseas cycling tour or a new bike – whatever works for you.

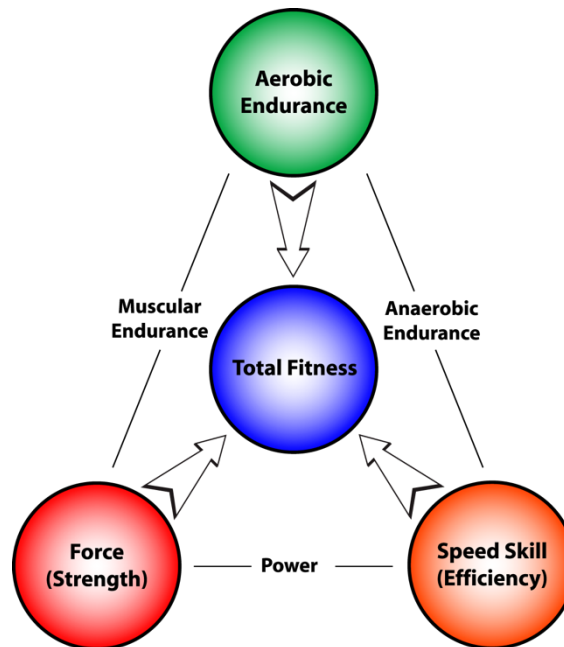
### Types of “Outcome” Objectives – A Few Suggestions

1. A Distance (100K, 160K or a Gran Fondo) – This is an easy one and can be measured quite easily. Distance also makes setting intermediate objectives easy.
2. A Time Over a Distance – Again this is quantifiable and lends itself to having intermediate objectives set. The Outbacks Ride is good for this.
3. Altitude Attained – The Hill Tops ‘n Coffee Shops Rides is the best means to achieve your objective
4. Speed Over A Distance – Again The Outbacks is the ride to quantify and achieve this goal.
5. Body Weight Lost – Improving body composition is the goal here. Trading excessive body fat for lean muscle may mean your weight won’t change dramatically, but your body composition will be improved.
6. Resting Heartrate/Cardiovascular Fitness – This is quantifiable using a Heart Rate Monitor. Some Heart Rate Monitors can track and show fitness trends.
7. Raise charity money for a good cause through a cycling challenge (Ride to Conquer Cancer, MS Ride etc.)
8. A Cycling holiday either domestic or overseas.

## Setting Out Your Season

The most essential point about laying out your season is that once an Outcome objective is identified **that point in time becomes the point at which you work backwards**. So, if for example, your goal is to ride 160 kilometres by September 3<sup>rd</sup> you can then set your Process and Performance objectives all the way back to your first ride of the year. If April 1 is your first ride, you have 5 months to build the essential **endurance, strength, and speed** to achieve your Outcome objective.

To be a well-rounded cyclist it is necessary to exercise and develop endurance, strength, and speed in the proper order and at the correct time.



1. **Endurance** is the essential **base fitness** that must be built before going on to build strength and efficiency. It is gained early in the season by applying the appropriate stimulus to cause the body to rebuild the cardiovascular system, muscles, and connective tissue to cope with the increased load being placed on it. This is a process that requires applying a light to moderate load over an extended period. The “long relatively slow ride” can be used to develop aerobic endurance.
2. **Strength** is built next and comes into play in mid/late spring. You may use weight training to build strength, but more specific training can be had by simply going out and riding into the wind at every opportunity or by hill riding. A **WARNING** - jumping straight into Strength training without first building Endurance often results in injury because the body systems will not be properly prepared for the greater loads.
3. **Efficiency** is built last. This involves fine tuning body position, pedalling form (developing that more rounded pedal stroke) and quite simply riding faster. Neuroscience tells us that the more often we repeat an action the more it becomes hard-wired into our nervous system. Riding in your Anaerobic heartrate zone at speed is likely the most difficult work that you will ever do in riding a bike. The benefits are undeniable though. Suddenly that steep section on that tough hill that had you pushing your bike now seems easier. Riding with the faster riders in the club is tolerable and maybe even enjoyable.

Throughout this progression your Process and Performance objectives will come into play as benchmarks of your journey towards your Outcome objective. Now you need to create a positive supportive environment to help you to succeed.

1. If you are a morning person and enjoy riding early, set out all your gear and prepare your bike the night before.
2. Don't forget do some Cognitive Priming to reward yourself at those intermediate Performance/Process goals.
3. Ride with a group or friends. If the group are friends and are more experienced and faster than you, that is even better. They will both challenge you and support you – double win!
4. Regularly watch some videos of your cycling holiday destination or of your favourite professional rider in action.
5. Develop a routine that supports your objectives. This involves caring for yourself by bringing together proper hydration/nutrition, massage and rest, and spiritual retreats where you don't think of bikes, riding, objectives and so on. All work and no play is a recipe for burnout.
6. Surround yourself with others who have the cycling bug. It's difficult to not be motivated when you're surrounded by fit enthused cyclists.

### **What happens if you get sick or injured?**

Firstly, properly managing your training and setting realistic objectives will reduce the possibility of becoming sick or injured. However, infection is not entirely within your control and these setbacks can appear, at the time, like your Outcome objective has been torpedoed. Often though, a forced rest of less than 2 weeks can result in returning to your program more motivated and with a remarkable level of your fitness intact.

If you are unfortunate enough to be off your bike for more than 2 weeks, it may mean reassessing your Outcome objective or looking for other ways of achieving success. We are now in the era of the electric assist bicycle - these can save a cycling destination holiday and are a great equalizer when riding with stronger riders.

It is essential that you do not toss the baby out with the bathwater! Don't give up on yourself – reset and push forward. You will likely look back from the other side of your Outcome objective with the great satisfaction of having achieved that goal. Equally important, it will give you the confidence to push even further in the future.