

inside FALL SHOE REVIEW - 24 MODELS TESTED

# RACERENTER

OCTOBER-DECEMBER 2007

northwest

## HIT THE TRAIL

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advice to prepare  
you for 2008

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Race Center NW Article  
2007 October/November Issue  
Topic: How to Transition Into the Off-Season

This is the fifth and final installment of our series of articles dedicated to giving every level of athlete some guidelines to prepare themselves for the challenges of different events. This article features tips on how to transition your self into the off-season and plan appropriate training to prepare yourself for the next year of racing. Each of the respective guidelines will be categorized for different levels of experience. You may fall into a grey area between these categories, so you should use your discretion in choosing the best strategy for your own needs.

Giving yourself permission to “shift gears” in your off season training may be the most valuable thing you can do all year to ensure that you continue to improve from year-to-year. All too often athletes decide to continue training at the same intensity and/or volume throughout the year and inevitably their performances will plateau or deteriorate. Your body needs to do one or more of the following:

- 1) Do something different.
- 2) Change the stress.
- 3) Change the intensity and volume.

In each of the following segments I will discuss the special considerations for each level of athlete embarking on your distance.

### **Do Something Different**

Whatever your primary sport or sports of choice are, one of the best ways to freshen things up is to do something completely different. Some examples would be skiing, snowboarding, ice skating and cross-country skiing in colder climates; Team Sports – soccer, volleyball, hockey, basketball, etc.; Individual Sports – tennis, golf, backpacking, climbing, etc. Each of these provides a diverse set of skills and stresses for your body that will make you a much better and more balanced athlete. Caution should be stressed as you embark into new sports, as your endurance fitness doesn't necessarily apply to their demands. Always honor the principle of “Specificity of Training”. Simply, this means that every different stress demands different adaptations

by your body. In this category every level of athlete is on even footing, unless you have experience in these alternative sports.

### **Change the Stress**

Changing what your body is specifically trained for is very important to give your body a break, while still maintaining or improving specific skills. Some examples of this are:

- Running – road runners should run trails, trail runners should run roads.
- Cycling – road bikers should try mountain biking and/or cyclocross, mountain bikers should get out on the road more.
- Swimmers – try getting out in the open water if you are a pool swimmer.

If you are a single sport athlete, try adding one or more of these endurance sports to diversify your training. As in the previous case, in this category every level of athlete is on even footing and should exercise some caution when changing their routine in this manner.

### **Change the Intensity and Volume**

Most athletes are coming off a long season of racing and whether you are feeling fit and fast or can't wait for a break, it is time to back off and recharge your batteries. Attempting to maintain or continue to improve your speed at this time of year is a recipe for disaster. Now is the time to cut back the intensity of your training and establish or reestablish a strong aerobic base.

- Beginners – This is probably the first time you have been in this position and you should think of this transition as an opportunity to evaluate what you have accomplished in the last year and look forward to the next racing season. In most cases this will be your first opportunity to do a dedicated base training period. Doing this properly will give you a strong foundation from which to build your upcoming race season upon. Anywhere from one to three months of building a base of mileage at moderate heart rate (65%-75% max heart rate) will do wonders for a new athlete.
- Intermediate – You have at least one year of training and racing behind you and have done a base building phase. In your case the best

thing to do is to extend the duration of the base building phase and/or extend the duration of individual workouts within your routine. Doing this will take you to a higher level of performance in your upcoming race season and “reset your boundaries” to what you are comfortable doing in your training and racing.

- Advanced – You have several years of experience training and racing behind you. You have likely gone through a few seasons of base training and the best way to raise your performance for your upcoming race season will be to include one or more “Epic” weeks to your routine. Within the context of your normal base building, one week per month you can do a significantly larger volume week. Extending your weekly hours up to 50% greater than your regular training volume will give you dramatic gains in fitness. Be sure to keep your intensity moderate (65%-75% of max heart rate) and take a low mileage recovery week the following week.

Taking time away from racing should be a restorative time for all competitors. It is important to understand that this time is vital to your overall health & wellness and to improving your performances year to year. Enjoy the time reflecting on your past season and begin to mentally prepare yourself for your upcoming season.

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**This text may be placed in a separate box as a guideline.**

**What level do you fall into?**

**Beginner- You are a first timer in your event or you have only completed your event several times. You are still a little worried about getting through your event. You are coming into your event with limited experience in one or more (for multisport) of the required discipline(s).**

**Intermediate- You have completed several races and you are confident that you will finish your event. You have seen some improvements with your training and race results. You are starting to think about how well you finish your event.**

**Advanced- You have been racing for at least one season and have progressed your training and racing to the point where you are “racing” your event. This means there is no question you will finish (barring unforeseen events) and you are fit enough, experienced enough and well prepared enough to be competitive.**