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A Mid-Season Break

It is now mid-season for most of the avid racers. This means that many of the northeast's die-hard athletes have been racing for almost 4 months now. While many riders may have had a particularly strong showing in the first half of the road season, they may soon find themselves scoring fewer results or not feeling as dominant in their respective categories. Is the rider getting slower, or is everyone else getting faster? Riders finding themselves asking this question may be due for a brief break to recharge both mentally and physically.

Why is a break so important? As the body is constantly pushed into the anaerobic race-state, this high intensity situation brings on a great deal of stress to the body in many different ways. A rider who finds him or herself racing consistently every weekend, participating in a few hard group rides during the week, and neglecting to find time for longer low intensity rides, will soon start to struggle to be able to maintain long high-intensity efforts. This is caused from an imbalance in the rider's metabolic and cardiovascular systems. Too much anaerobic work without enough aerobic maintenance can actually cause an athlete to produce abnormally high levels of lactic acid. High amounts of lactic acid without a strong and well maintained cardiovascular base can lead to a lack

in the ability to push oneself and the inability to have extended VO2 max capability.

Riders may also find themselves mentally fatigued as well as physically. If a rider has had a poor early season, he or she may be trying to race often in order to fish out a good result. Even the very successful early season rider may find himself or herself trying to hold onto good form by doing too many high intensity workouts. With constant intensity and a little too much determination, a rider may find him or herself unable to complete both the races and workouts with the same intensity. The mental frustration can be an additional source of stress on the rider, which can lead to decreased recovery time and lower moral.

So how can someone fix this problem? The solution suggested by CCNS is to take a step back and walk away from the bike for a few days. Take 5 to 10 days as pure recovery days. If the rider feels he or she must ride, keep the rides under 1 hour and below aerobic threshold. Don't be afraid to take days completely off the bike. With some long term recovery a rider will find that their body will bounce back into good form much sooner. Use the recovery week to think about late season goals and to establish a good training plan for the second half of the season. This can often be a time to catch up on neglected home, family, or work duties as well. Take the time to mentally relax and come back ready to fully commit to a successful rest of the season.

Aidan Charles
Charles Coaching and Nutrition Services
860.538.9369
info@charlescoaching.com
www.charlescoaching.com