

Coach-Athlete Q&A

A look at some coach-replies to common questions by topic.

Q: If my Cycling zones are as follows.....EA 123-135.....Maf 136-146.....A.T. 147-159. Where should my heart rate zones be when I'm running.

If I know how long a certain loop takes me and I can measure my heart rate isn't pace a bit more difficult? I've thought about buying a Garmin for that purpose.....David

A: Hey David.....here's the thing (and a rule to live/train by):

Heart Rate is NOT the measure of true work output. Rather, heart-rate IS the measure of the *EFFECT* of that true work output.....on you.....under a given set of varying conditions.

Read this over and over.....because some athletes assume that HR is the holy-grail indicating the work that's actually being done. Not true.

Here's an example:

Let's say that I have you run 5 miles @ 145bpm on a 90 degree day.
.....and then run that same 5 miles @ that same 145bpm on a 50 degree day.

Was 145bpm the work that was being done??

No! Because on one of those days.....you'd be close to 12-min-per-mile trying to keep it only @ 145bpm.....while on the 50-degree day, you may sail through @ 10-min-miles @ that same 145bpm.

So the real work produced WAS the pace (per-mile) that you ran.....and the duration that you ran it (5 miles).

The *EFFECT* of that work was the hr.....ie: 145bpm.

David.....this is precisely why pro cyclist no longer train primarily w/ hrm's....and instead use wattage meters. Because they don't want to diagnose their chosen intensity based on the conditionally EFFECTed variables.

They wanna decide the intensity based on what they're trying to achieve.....producing more real work (wattage).

I coach over 20 people training w/ wattage meters, now. EVERY SINGLE ONE OF THEM will tell you how dramatically they found that the hrm LIED to them regarding what intensity to train/race at.

Why? Because of the variables.....wind, heat, humidity, stress, sleep, nutrition,you name it.

In fact, I have people who find that, when riding on the trainer (indoors....controlled variables).....the get REALLY different hr's per a given perceived exertion compared to outdoor riding.

WHAT to do?.....use a hrm only to offer a view of the COST (*ie: the cost on you*) of the real work being done.....

.....and, use that measure of "real work" (pace-per-mile running, wattage measurement on the bike, pace-per-100m swimming) to calculate the intensity of the session.

In other words.....a hrm is ok and offers a glimpse.....but the Garmin (or marking the road w/ mile-markers) would be a truer value. Make sense? **Sonni**