Coach-Athlete Q&A

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

>**Q**: Sonni,
> First question: the way I understand heart rate zones, my aerobic base is 130-145 bpm. Next, you have an anaerobic threshold, anaerobic base, race pace (tempo), and then your maximum heart rate:
>
> Aerobic - 130 - 145
> Anaerobic threshold - 145-155 (correct ?)
> Anaerobic Base - (correct ?)
> Race Zone - 155-163 (we decided it was ideal at 158ish) (correct ?)
> Maximum - 180 ish? (correct ?)
>
> What would be my ideal anaerobic and race zones?
>
> Second, how should I handle this early season race (Umstead Duathlon)? Race tempo all the way? Run easy, race tempo bike? Run tempo, ride easy? Use the hr monitor and treat it all as a workout?
L.B.

A: Hey L, You're partly (mostly) right on your zones and their definitions and 'purposes'.
We begin with your **MAF.....you Maximum Aerobic Function zone**.....the highest you can be and still be strictly aerobic. THIS **is** your base.....for you we've calculated it from 135 to 145bpm (we may need to go 1 to 3 bpm one or another to fine-tune, but this is the range). This is where you make efficient your ability to operate 'with' oxygen....and do so maximally.

Then, below that, is your **"endurance Aerobic" zone.....or EA** (also called "RA", recovery aerobic in different phases of the year). The lower end of this is where you'll actively recover from harder sessions and the upper end is where you'll perform your long, endurance bike rides.....120 to 134bpm.

Now immediately ***above*** the MAF (145) is your **A.T. zone ....your anaerobic threshold**. This is where we make you more efficient at race-pace/tempo heart-rates by bouts at lactate threshold. Early in a season, when you're not as efficient here, your LT/AT-limit may be only 10bpm higher than maf (155bpm).....Later, our aim is to 'push back' your LT/AT-limit as much as possible.....so that you'll still be solidly functioning (disipating lactic acid) @ higher heart-rates and faster paces.....say 159 to 162bpm, by July.

BUT here's the catch:
Triathlon IS AN ENDURANCE SPORT and dependant on FUEL (sugar) always (& a larger proportion of fat after the initial 90minutes), because without it, it doesn't matter where, or how efficient, you are @ race-pace (AT). Even the fastest race-cars get beaten by the 'Chevettes' when they're out of gas.....and many a pro has walked in the marathon @ Ironman.

This is why we first prepare you METABOLISM in the base phase @ restricted heart-rates.....We're dialing in your 'burn-ratio/energy demand', BEFORE we expect race-specific fitness.....and this is done at MAF.

So know that race pace heart-rate CHANGES as we become more efficient with dealing with lactic acid. And this is precisely why I don't reccomend wearing a hrm in races shorter than 2hrs. It provides only a half-truth for that day, a potential 'mis-guide' for future races, and could serve as a crutch from developing a 'feel' for racing close to your threshold.....wherever that # may be at that point in your preparation.

Where we DO use the monitor for racing is in Olympic distance and half-iron events and longer. NOW it gives a picture of our 'fuel-usage-rate'.....much like a rpm-meter and gas-tank gauge in a car. In those instances, it can give valuble feedback into how our hydration and calorie consumption is affecting our output/effort.
Sonni Dyer