



COACHING PERFORMANCE TESTING CLINICS TRAINING PLANS

Bicycle Racing 101:

Clarify Expectations, Establish Priorities, & Evaluate Performance

By:

George Sexton

Expert Level Licensed Cycling Coach



Cyclists need tactical knowledge, technical skills, physical fitness, and mental strengths and skills to become successful racers. Studies show that satisfied competitive cyclists share the following generic strengths and characteristics:

- ⊖ excellent physical fitness,
- ⊖ a confident, optimistic outlook on life,
- ⊖ high intrinsic motivation,
- ⊖ refined technical skills,
- ⊖ tactical knowledge of cycling, and a
- ⊖ competitive nature that embraces challenge.

Achieving competition level physical and psychological fitness requires a good deal of dedication and work for most individuals. Smart cyclists honestly appraise their readiness to race before stepping up to the start line for the first time. Doing so gives them a better idea of their relative strengths and weaknesses and a clearer sense of the specific areas they must address to achieve their individual goals. The attached instruments are designed to help cyclists (1) clarify their expectations, (2) assess their strengths and weaknesses, and (3) look back on their initial racing season and evaluate what worked.

DIRECTIONS:

Complete the “***Why Do You Want To Race***” form first. Then review each statement in the “***Race Readiness Survey***” and indicate the extent to which it is true for **you** by circling one number for each assessment factor. The numbers equate to the following scale:

- (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) neither agree nor disagree
- (4) agree, (5) strongly agree.

Tally your points and use the keys to interpret your section and overall scores. Make a note of the areas in which your individual assessment factor and section scores indicate a need for improvement, and prioritize the areas you must address to achieve your goals. Finally, the “***End of Season Reflections – Twenty Questions***” survey can be used after the racing season to evaluate your first season of competition.

Race Readiness Survey

1. Mental Strengths and Skills ... Generally speaking, I:

1.1 enjoy competition	1	2	3	4	5
1.2 thrive on challenge	1	2	3	4	5
1.3 am calm, confident and optimistic	1	2	3	4	5
1.4 set achievable and challenging goals	1	2	3	4	5
1.5 stick to an organized plan for goal achievement	1	2	3	4	5
1.6 focus on the present during important events	1	2	3	4	5
1.7 have a good sense of emotional control	1	2	3	4	5
1.8 am flexible	1	2	3	4	5
1.9 cope well with adversity, distractions and obstacles	1	2	3	4	5
1.10 am willing to endure physical pain and suffering	1	2	3	4	5
1.11 will not get discouraged based on poor performance	1	2	3	4	5
1.12 will not get discouraged based on poor results	1	2	3	4	5
1.13 am highly motivated by things under my control	1	2	3	4	5
1.14 can assess myself with a critical, non-judgmental eye	1	2	3	4	5
1.15 like myself	1	2	3	4	5
1.16 am passionate about the things I enjoy doing	1	2	3	4	5
1.17 enjoy working with others	1	2	3	4	5
Mental Strengths and Skills, cont'd. Generally speaking, I:					

1.18 can maintain my composure when things go awry	1	2	3	4	5
1.19 enjoy surprises	1	2	3	4	5
1.20 have a sense of humor and don't beat myself up	1	2	3	4	5
<p>1. Mental Strengths and Skills ...</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Section Score _____</p> <p>75 > 100 ... Ready ... According to your self-assessment you currently have the mental skills and strengths needed to race.</p> <p>46 > 74 ... Possibly Ready ... You can not change your personality (nor should you do so), but you may want to take a close look at the kinds of mental "skills" that you could work on, such as coping with adversity or distractions, to improve your likelihood of success.</p> <p>20 > 45 ... Currently Unready ... According to your self-assessment, you may not find much fulfillment or satisfaction in racing. Take a serious look at why you want to race and whether competition is right for you at this time. If you believe that you want to race, don't be dissuaded by your low scores, instead, take practical steps to improve your mental skills and look for ways in which you can achieve fulfillment in competitive bike racing.</p>					
<p>2. Technical Skills ... I am confident in my ability to:</p>					
2.1 corner safely at high speeds in a pack	1	2	3	4	5
2.2 descend safely at high speeds in a pack	1	2	3	4	5
2.3 look back safely while riding in a pack	1	2	3	4	5
2.4 contact other riders and maintain control in a pack	1	2	3	4	5
2.5 drink and eat safely at high speeds in a pack	1	2	3	4	5
2.6 brake smoothly and control my bike in a pack	1	2	3	4	5
2.7 pedal efficiently on all types of terrain	1	2	3	4	5

2. Technical Skills ...

Section Score _____

26 > 35 ... Ready ... According to your self-assessment you currently have the bike handling skills needed to race safely in a pack.

16 > 25 ... Possibly Ready ... Take a close look at the specific skill areas in which you rated yourself lowly, and take steps to improve your performance in these areas.

7 > 15 ... Currently Unready ... It may not be safe for you as well as others if you raced now. Devote time to improving your bike handling skills. As your skills improve so will your confidence.

3. Physical Fitness ... I am confident that I have the:

3.1 aerobic / endurance base needed to compete	1	2	3	4	5
3.2 ability to sustain power under stress for 45 min. at a time	1	2	3	4	5
3.3 fitness to stay with the pack on long hills	1	2	3	4	5
3.4 fitness to stay with the pack on short, steep hills	1	2	3	4	5
3.5 fitness to cover attacks from other riders	1	2	3	4	5
3.5 fitness to bridge from one group to another	1	2	3	4	5
3.6 fitness to attack and establish separation from a group	1	2	3	4	5
3.7 know-how to recover during training and after racing	1	2	3	4	5
3.8 nutritional habits that will support racing	1	2	3	4	5

3. Physical Fitness ...

Section Score _____

30 > 40 ... Ready ... According to your self-assessment you currently have the fitness needed to race.

18 > 29 ... Possibly Ready ... Take a close look at the areas in which you rated yourself lowly, and take steps to improve your performance in these areas. Follow a plan in doing so. Remember to be patient and persistent; cycling fitness does not materialize overnight. But if you work at it, you will see progress.

8 > 17 ... Currently Unready ... You may find it very frustrating to race because according to your self assessment you currently don't have the fitness to stay with the pack. Follow the advice outlined immediately above. Set specific fitness goals and establish time frames for achieving them, and stick to your plan as much as possible. In time you will see progress.

4. Tactical Knowledge ... I am confident that I can learn and apply:

4.1 pace line procedures and etiquette	1	2	3	4	5
4.2 how to work in an echelon	1	2	3	4	5
4.3 how to conserve my energy when I'm under stress	1	2	3	4	5
4.4 road race rules	1	2	3	4	5
4.5 criterium rules	1	2	3	4	5
4.6 when and where to initiate an attack against other riders	1	2	3	4	5
4.7 when to counter-attack & when to let an attack go	1	2	3	4	5
4.8 which of the other racers are good wheels to follow	1	2	3	4	5
4.9 how to work with competitors and team mates in a race	1	2	3	4	5
4.10 how to choose the line for a sprint to the finish	1	2	3	4	5
4.11 how to choose the best "wheel" for a sprint	1	2	3	4	5

4. Tactical Knowledge ...

Section Score _____

41 > 55 ... Ready ... According to your self-assessment you currently have the tactical knowledge needed to race.

25 > 40 ... Possibly Ready ... Take a close look at the areas in which you rated yourself lowly, and take steps to improve your knowledge in these areas. Some of this knowledge can be learned off the bike (e.g., rules), but much of it is best learned by riding, training, and racing. Keep a diary to record what you have learned, and don't let a low score in this area dissuade you from racing ... this is stuff that can be learned "on the job".

11 > 24 ... Currently Unready ... You have scored yourself low in this area. That is, you have concerns or questions about your ability to learn and apply race rules and smart tactics. But remember, you are not expected to possess this knowledge in order to race, since much of it can only be gained through riding, training, and racing. So, the immediate question is, why do you doubt your ability to learn and apply this knowledge? Take a look at that question and then take corrective actions to enhance your tactical knowledge.

Total Score: _____

Interpreting Your Overall Score:

173 > 230	Race Ready ... According to your self-assessment, you are ready to race
106 > 172	Possibly Ready ... According to your self-assessment, you could benefit from improvements in selected areas. Identify the areas where your scores were low and use the work sheet (below) to set priorities for improvement.
46 > 105	Currently Unready ... According to your self-assessment, you have work to do in the majority of areas related to race readiness before you can compete safely and successfully. Use the work sheet (below) to set priorities for improvement.

Race Readiness Action Plan



My Goals Are:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Priority Areas That I Need To Improve To Reach My Goals:

Mental Strength and Skills: _____

Technical Skills: _____

Physical Fitness: _____

Tactical Knowledge: _____



End of Season Reflections:

What Worked? What Did Not Work?
What Did I Learn? What Has To Change?

Twenty Questions

1. What thing(s) positively affected your ability to perform through the season?
2. What thing(s) negatively affected your ability to perform through the season? What would you do to prevent or mitigate these things next season?
3. What are the five most important things that you learned this season ... physically, technically, tactically, and mentally?
4. What would you do the same to prepare for next season?
5. What would you do differently in preparing for next season?
6. What race(s) did you enjoy the most this season ... Why?
7. What race(s) did you enjoy the least this season ... Why?
8. What race(s) do you want to do most next season ... Why?
9. What race(s) do you want to skip next season ... Why?
10. What do you think you accomplished this season?
11. What do you want to accomplish next season?

12. What, if any, changes would you make in your race day routine next season ... pre-race, post-race?
13. What changes would you make in your pre-race season training next year?
14. Think of your best performance this season ... Why did it go so well?
15. Think of your worst performance this season ... Why did it go so badly?
16. What things in your environment (e.g., music, people) were helpful?
17. What things in your environment were unhelpful?
18. Overall, how would you grade your season in terms of how it matched up against your hopes and expectations? On a scale of 1 to 10 with 1 being very disappointing and 10 being very satisfactory.
19. If you could change one thing to improve your performance and accomplishments next season what would it be?
20. What, if any, random notes or comments do you want to jot down in preparation for next season?