

5 ways to get your mind right and keep your head in the race.

Your mind drives your outcome, just like gears operate your bike. It determines your focus, confidence, and long-term ability to reach and exceed your expectations. While you need the physical tools necessary to ride for hours and miles, your mind will make or break you. “We seldom overcome our self-imposed limitations, which makes mindset, good or bad, a game changer,” says Trevor Moawad, vice president of mindset programs at Athletes’ Performance. Use his tips below to develop a winning mindset.

TIP #1 Develop a plan.

You have to develop and trust your plan, whether in training or on race day. Moawad says the biggest issue plaguing athletes is an inability to trust the plan they’ve laid out which impacts the overall consistency of preparation and execution. Without the proper training foundation, no amount of positivity or mindset will help you win come race day. Planning and sticking to that plan will give you the physical foundation needed to achieve your goals.

“Realistic goals and a tailored training plan will help build your confidence, which gives you the ‘I can do it’ mindset needed to win,” says Moawad. “Confidence comes from the belief that you can achieve your task, and training gives that to you. Willpower will always lose out to what you know to be true about yourself. At the simplest level, do the work.”

TIP #2 Check your attitude.

Focusing on the negative won’t help you or your training partners. Manage your mindset. The key to a successful ride is keeping positive. If it’s hot, don’t talk about the heat. Don’t even mention it, says Moawad. “When I train people, we don’t talk about the negative. If it’s heat, no one is allowed to mention it,” he says. “Attitudes are contagious and they affect the people around you. We’re not implying that the heat doesn’t exist, but we know our words (or lack of them) can limit its long-term impact.”

To keep from bringing yourself or others down, surround yourself with positive people who are there to help you stay positive. And, if you’re feeling negative, keep it to yourself instead of bringing down your training partners. “A great attitude may not always get you the results you want, but a bad attitude will always hurt you,” says Moawad.

TIP #3 Practice adaptability.

You can’t control everything about a race. You can only control yourself and occasionally who you surround yourself with. The key to a good race is controlling what you can, but training to overcome obstacles, not succumb to them. As part of a healthy training plan, practice adaptability. “You have to keep the mindset that you can do anything, this can mean riding in the rain, having to use a different bike, anything that would upset your routine,” says Moawad. “You have to learn to roll with it.”

Upgrade your training routine by working in adverse conditions and developing a game plan to overcome them. For example, if you always like to ride in the middle lane, practice riding in the outer lanes to adjust. You can’t plan or practice for everything, but your ability to adapt to the unexpected can be learned. The goal is to keep your mind easy and not to panic.

TIP #4 Focus on short-term goals.

Moawad says that short-term goals are the key to success during a ride. “Keeping your focus on what you do every few minutes (e.g. hitting the pedal, turning, etc.) is often more effective than looking ahead to speed or outcome,” he says. Forget winning and break down the race. Each of those small goals will lead you to the bigger goal. Use this strategy to push through the long, treacherous portions of the race where it’s easy to find your mind wandering and worrying about your placement or how far ahead or behind you may be.

TIP #5 Build your own ad campaign.

Think of your mind as an internal advertising campaign. You're constantly communicating with yourself. When you're on a long ride, especially the lonely, long paths with few people giving you external motivation, your mind is what you rely on. "Look at your mind like a Super Bowl commercial," says Moawad. "A 30-second commercial can cost 3 million dollars because it works. Great ad campaigns can impact you. Remember: No one gets to the top with a weak mentality."

During training, work on different slogans or sayings to help push yourself through the tough spots. Focus on what motivates you—family, a friend, victory. Picture yourself celebrating on the podium surrounded by friends or family. Perfect this strategy during training and it'll be there to tap into when you most need it most.

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