

# The SLOW•STEP Philosophy

I am often asked by riders about how their cycling could be improved. My response is in some respects counterintuitive and not always believed or sometimes greeted with skepticism. Nevertheless, I have outlined below my philosophy behind training and improving as a cyclist.

During the 22-WEEK WINTER TRAINING PROGRAM, you will see how all of these components work together to make you a faster cyclist:

- Go *slower* to get *faster*. This is where the SLOW comes from in SLOW•STEP
- Strengthen cycling-specific muscles
- Learn how to eat properly to achieve your goals
- Follow an organized approach to training and stick with it. Don't add things to the program (willy-nilly) haphazardly, which is like adding extra baking soda to an already complete baking recipe. It usually doesn't help and often can make things worse.
- Economical riding usually trumps riding harder.
- The development of specific fitness systems through focused blocks of training
- We don't pay lip service to rest and recovery - we schedule it!
- If you are tired, skip a day or two. Listen to your body. Many times, less is more. No making up days. If we skip one, let it go.
  - Remember: Training + Recovery = Fitness
- Hammer-hammer-hammer is bad-bad-bad. Do you really expect to get better by killing yourself every time you ride? This training program doesn't work that way.
- Unless cycling is your job, cycling should augment your life and not define it. You need to understand why you are riding before you can progress. Once riding becomes a labor or chore you will most likely lose focus.
- Strength and conditioning "off" the bike
- Staying injury free is essential to being able to train and enjoy cycling.

# What to Expect From the Program

- A comprehensive 22-week training program with daily training guidelines.
- Protocols based on heart rate, cadence, and/or power that are integrated into the weekly group rides and your busy lives. The way to improve is to follow the program, communicate with me how you're feeling, and stay within your training ranges.
- Personal attention during weekly group rides and unlimited contact with me via email or telephone for the 22 weeks.
- General strength and conditioning for the gym with core and stretching routines. Getting off the bike and taking care of the rest of your body is essential to success and injury prevention for a lot of athletes. You don't need to ride seven days a week.
- General nutritional advice for training, racing, and recovery. You will learn how to eat properly and how to lose weight if that is your goal. Eating during the rides is absolutely essential. Please put down those gel packets and eat some real food.
- Specific nutrition and hydration guidelines for the WEDNESDAY AND SUNDAY GROUP RIDES.
- Bike fit recommendations while riding together. We will talk about your position and riding style while you are on the bike. A full bike fit is outside the scope of this program, though is available for an additional fee.
- Personalized heart rate/power zones. You will learn how to ride in your zones to get the most out of the program. Hammering along may get you to the local coffee shop quicker but may not be the best route to becoming faster on the bike over the long haul.
- Learning from others. You will have ample opportunities to ride and talk with some of my full-time athletes and hear what they have to say about their experience with the 22-WEEK WINTER TRAINING PROGRAM. [Click here](#) to hear what riders have to say. Learning from others is often the fastest route to success.
- A group to train with all winter long that has similar cycling goals. Don't underestimate the power of having a good group to train with. Be prepared to meet some great people.

- Riding safety and etiquette
- If you are at least a moderate Category 5 rider, you should be fine on our group rides; however, you may want to know what happens if you come out on the WEDNESDAY and SUNDAY SLOW•STEP GROUP RIDES and find that you are not strong enough to participate properly.

First, be sure not to view this as a failure, but rather as a stepping stone to becoming a better cyclist. Riders in the past have done one of two things:

- They ditch the program out of frustration, OR
- I put them on a modified program that requires them to train on their own or with a partner/friend for the winter.

With the second option, you will receive the tools and support to develop the base and strength needed to help you participate the following winter. This approach requires us to work together beyond the 22 weeks and all through the year, gearing you up to be able to handle the following year's winter program with the group. This approach may or may not be for you. Again, it all comes down to how much you are willing to contribute and how committed you are to growing as a cyclist.

I have a handful of riders who weren't strong enough to participate in the 22-WEEK WINTER TRAINING PROGRAM on the first go around. They committed to a longer-term picture and are now some of my strongest amateur riders.

If you follow the program, it will provide you with the tools to achieve *your best season ever!*

# What You Need to Participate

- Heart rate monitor. A power meter is optional.
- Helmets are mandatory on all rides.
- Cadence on your cycling computer.
- Gearing at a minimum of a 39-27. Most riders, including the professionals I coach, prefer compact cranks 34-50 with a rear cassette of 11-27/28, especially if the rider is over 150 pounds and/or not a strong category 1 or 2 climber.
- Highly motivated and fully committed to the 22-WEEK WINTER TRAINING PROGRAM. Riders must have a positive attitude and play well with others.

## Registration Information

### Cost

\$1,050 non-refundable fee. This fee will cover the entire 22-WEEK WINTER TRAINING PROGRAM.

### Group limit

This group will be limited to 25 coached riders.

### Pre-registration screening

All riders must undergo an initial screening evaluation to determine if they are a good fit for the program. A liability waiver will be required.

If you train with a buddy, consider joining the program together. Or, do as other cyclists have done in the past: join without your buddy and see who has improved the most come February/March. This can be a fun experiment.

### For more information

Please contact me at [slowstepcycling.com](http://slowstepcycling.com)

# 5 Things I Expect of You

## Seeking a Coach or Mentor

It is common in nearly everyone's cycling experience to hit a plateau, despite trying and working hard. Many realize that the best way to accelerate past the plateau and move to the next level is through personalized training and working with a coach.

Many professional cyclists and serious amateur cyclists work or have worked with a coach at some point in their training. As opposed to working and training alone, coached cycling programs have the advantage of ongoing interaction between the coach and athlete, and provide an objective view of your training.

My expectations of you throughout the 22-WEEK WINTER TRAINING PROGRAM are unique as I require a high level of interaction and accountability. The program will work only if I am able to tailor it to each individual athlete. In order to get the most out of the 22-week program, you must first realize that keeping an open line of communication with your coach is the best way to reach your goals.

## There is More Than One Way to Skin a Cat – This is Mine

In every bike magazine and cycling website you'll find bits and pieces of good training information. The major issue I see with athletes wanting to train smarter is they don't approach their training as an integrated program. Rather they try out every new fangled interval or nutrition tip they find online. That only serves to create a haphazard approach to training. This program is one that was developed over the course of 10+ years of coaching and advising hundreds of athletes and is proven effective. Avoid the temptation to read cycling websites and magazines to tweak your program with incomplete bits and pieces of well meaning advice.

## Forget What You Think You Know

Sometimes letting go is the most difficult thing to do. Cyclists can be a stubborn group of athletes. Year after year they ride and train in the same way in the hope of getting better or faster, or upgrading to the next category. Sometimes it seems that they hold on to their training beliefs, not because they work, but because they're simply attached to them. I challenge you to forget what you know and try something new. It does not mean that what you have been doing is wrong, but that the 22-WEEK WINTER TRAINING PROGRAM might just be better. You can always go back to what you were doing before.

## **Be Receptive to New Experiences**

Whenever we present you with new training techniques and tips, absorb them like a sponge. Clear your mind and be open for an entirely new experience. There is a lot to absorb in 22 weeks. I ask all of my athletes to be open to new experiences. This is an essential component of growth.

## **You Are Not Allowed to Quit**

Improving your cycling skills and fitness is a commitment. You will not see change happen overnight. In fact, I can almost guarantee you that you will be slower (and possibly more tired) in the middle of the program. I need your commitment. You are not allowed to quit until the end of the program. The program is designed to leave you at the start of the racing season with a more solid base of endurance, strength, and economy than ever before. You will still need to race and/or do some race intensity training to polish off your fitness throughout February and into the beginning of March. This is when you go on your way or we can consider the potential of working together full time.

We need to “SLOW” you down to build you up. If at the end of the 22 weeks you find that you have not reached your goals, then and only then are you allowed to throw in the towel.

I challenge you to see if you have what it takes to make it through a solid winter of organized training.

# Program Overview

## September

This is RECOVERY and recharge month and includes five weeks of GROUP HIKES (cross training). There is strength and conditioning work in the gym (including functional core and stretching), and easy cycling with pedal drills geared around pedal stroke development.

## October

The SUNDAY SLOW•STEP GROUP RIDE starts. The focus is on endurance riding and hill climbing, with pedaling drills and the introduction of on-the-bike strength training. Strength and conditioning in the gym continues.

## November

The WEDNESDAY SLOW•STEP GROUP RIDE is added. WEDNESDAY and SUNDAY GROUP RIDES focus on endurance, hill climbing, pedaling drills, and on-the-bike strength work. More climbing and volume are added. We introduce TEMPO riding. Strength and conditioning in the gym continues.

## December

The WEDNESDAY and SUNDAY SLOW•STEP GROUP RIDES continue with endurance, hill climbing, and TEMPO work. We introduce (1) high cadence climbing at higher heart rates and (2) power development. RACE SIMULATIONS begin. Strength and conditioning in the gym continues.

## January

The WEDNESDAY and SUNDAY SLOW•STEP GROUP RIDES continue with the reintroduction of harder on-the-bike strength training and the addition of SURGES. We also continue to build heart rates up to and above your time trial intensities. Group RACE SIMULATIONS are more frequent. Strength and conditioning in the gym becomes optional based on your individual needs. Stretching and core work continue.

# Group Training Details

## The Saturday **SLOW•STEP** Group Hike

**Work out Purpose:** Cross training and a break from structured riding. This is a great time to get to know each other.

**Start Locations:** Mission Trails Regional Park (The Visitors Center\*)

**Start Time:** 8:00 AM

**Finish Time:** 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM

**Distance:** 5 to 9 miles, 2 to 3.5 hours

**Climbing:** 900 to 3,000 feet

**Difficulty:** Moderate to moderately difficult

### **Hike Description:**

The hike varies weekly throughout Mission Trails, mostly at endurance pace with hours of great conversation. We are very exposed to the sun all day, almost no cover.

### **Equipment:**

Trail running sneakers are ideal, hiking boots are ok as well. "NO TENNIS SHOES." Hiking shorts/pants, a long or short-sleeve shirt, jacket, hat, protective eyewear, sun block, and a good pair of athletic socks, preferably not cotton. We are on some pretty challenging terrain at times with a good amount of climbing and descending. A Camel Back with a 70 to 100 ounce reservoir is recommended as there is no place to get water on the hikes, and they will get up to 3.5 hours in duration, also a bottle (25 ounces) of Gatorade or some sports drink is recommended. Food, bring around 300 calories for each hour of hiking and a nice lunch for after the hike (600 to 800 calories) should be fine.

\*The Visitors Center Location: [http://www.mtrp.org/vc\\_directions.asp](http://www.mtrp.org/vc_directions.asp)



# The Sunday SLOW•STEP Group Ride

**Ride Type:** Group endurance/fitness systems training

**Start Locations:** (1) McDonald's, In Rancho San Diego, Fury & Jamacha (short option) 2646 Jamacha Rd, El Cajon, CA 92019. (2) Pioneer Park, Mission Hills (long option) 1500 Washington Place, 92103

**Start Time:** 7:25 AM

**Finish Time:** Approximately 2:00 PM

**Distance:** 40 to 85 miles, 3 to 6 hours

**Climbing:** 4,000 to 7,000 feet

**Difficulty:** Moderately hard to very hard

Weather May Cancel: Greater than 50 percent probability of rain will cancel the coaching on this ride. I will contact you via email by 6 AM on any given Sunday to cancel.

## **Ride Description:**

(1) Short option: Ride the Great Western, leaving McDonald's ([2646 Jamacha Rd, El Cajon, CA 92019](https://www.google.com/maps/place/2646+Jamacha+Rd,+El+Cajon,+CA+92019)) at Fury and Jamacha (take 94 East to Jamacha) in Rancho San Diego. We leave at 8:55 AM "SHARP", back to McDonald's at 12:00ish. This loop is approximately 3 hours and 4,000 feet of climbing.

(2) Long option: Ride from Pioneer Park ([1500 Washington Pl, San Diego, CA 92103](https://www.google.com/maps/place/1500+Washington+Pl,+San+Diego,+CA+92103)) Washington Place and Randolph, 7:25 AM in Mission Hills, via the North Park water tower (Howard and Utah, 7:45 AM), through La Mesa to McDonald's, arriving at approximately 8:45 AM, refill water use restrooms and leaving at 8:55 AM "SHARP". Then ride the Great Western. We return to McDonald's in Rancho San Diego at Fury around 12:00ish PM. Refill water, use the restrooms and start our return trip back to Mission Hills. This ride is 5 to 6 hours and approximately 6,000 to 7,000 feet depending on the route we take home.

## **Ride Structure:**

The Great Western section of the ride is structured. Workouts are for targeted systems training. Training is mostly co-operative rather than competitive. Coaching hints and tips are given at regrouping points. With large attendance the ride may be split into ability groups. Faster riders have the option to turn around at regrouping points and ride back to the slowest riders for extra mileage and climbing.

After a 5-mile warm-up, there are roughly 13 miles of continuous climbing and then rolling descents. There will be regrouping points.

Gear recommendations: A minimum of a 39-27 is suggested in order to be able to perform the workouts properly. I highly recommend compact cranks (34-50) with an 11-27/28 rear cassette. Especially if you are over 150 pounds and/or not a strong category one or two rider.

This structured ride is specifically designed to coach and train base racing fitness, although you do not need to race to be on the ride. It is not a "training ride" in the sense that most racing clubs use the term. Quite unlike rides elsewhere, the ride has specific exercises, multiple regrouping points, and professional coaching provided along the way.

**View a map of the ride:** [THE SUNDAY SLOW•STEP GROUP RIDE](#)

## The Wednesday **SLOW•STEP** Group Ride

**Ride Type:** Group endurance/fitness systems training

**Start Locations:** Varies weekly, I will communicate via email each week's route details, starting point, and time.

**Start Time:** Between 8:00 AM to 8:30 AM.

**Finish Time:** Back to the cars by 2:00 to 3:30 PM

**Distance:** 65 to 90+ miles, 4.5 to 6+ hours

**Climbing:** 6,000 to 10,000 feet

**Difficulty:** Moderately hard to very hard

Weather May Cancel: Greater than 50 percent probability of rain will cancel the coaching on this ride. If rains or other conditions threaten, I will contact you via email by 6 AM on any given Wednesday to cancel.

### **Ride Description:**

Mountainous, same coaching on the ride and gearing needed as the SUNDAY GROUP RIDE.

### **Ride structure:**

Similar to Sunday in regards to the progression and fitness systems we will be developing.

The WEDNESDAY and SUNDAY **SLOW•STEP** GROUP RIDES are "very" important components in the 22-WEEK TRAINING PROGRAM. I will be on most of them and look forward to being a part of your weekly development. It is important that I am closely involved with you to evaluate how you are responding to the training, so we can continue along or make the necessary modifications to keep you progressing.

Wednesdays can be a challenge for those with jobs/careers. With a REST WEEK every fourth week or so, three Wednesdays per month for three months translates to just nine WEDNESDAY GROUP RIDES (this can be a fun way to use some vacation days).

# Nutrition for the Wednesday and Sunday

## **SLOW•STEP** Group Rides

### Hydration

- Bring two large 25 ounce (750ml) bottles.
- Drink one bottle per hour in temperate conditions.
- Fill at least half your bottles with a sports drink you like (six to eight percent carbohydrate solution) Gatorade mixed with Maltodextrin is what I use (with table salt added on hot days). You can bring your extra powdered drink mix in plastic zip lock baggies and mix into water at the fill up points.
- Drink plenty of water the day before and after the rides.

### Food

- Eat a carbohydrate rich dinner the evening before the rides.
- Breakfast should be a minimum of 800 calories and up to 1,500 calories.
- Be sure to have enough food on the ride, no less than 250 calories per hour and no more than 400 calories per hour of riding.
- After the ride have a lunch or recovery drink packed in the car (in a cooler) 500 to 700 calories should be fine, the timing of this meal is very important, eat or drink your lunch ASAP, when you get off your bike! Sooner is better.
- Here is a typical 5.5 hour SUNDAY **SLOW•STEP** GROUP RIDE, what and when I eat and drink for the day.
- Breakfast: 1,200 to 1,500 calories at about 6 AM and 16 ounces of water.
- During the ride: 300 calories per hour, 300 calories x 5.5 hours = 1,650 calories, Fluids are consumed at the rate of one bottle (25 ounces) per hour. So for 5.5 hours that's five to six bottles (125 to 150 ounces). Half of this fluid is a Gatorade and maltodextrin mix. (The fluid calories are part of the total 300 calories per hour, not in addition to).
- After the ride (within 20 minutes or so): I consume approximately 800 calories, this is around 2:30 PM.

- That's a grand total of approximately 3,700 to 3,800 calories by 3:00 PM, and we're not done yet.
- So from 2:30ish until around 7:00 PM which is approximately three hours before I go to bed, I eat another 2,000 calories and continue to drink plenty of fluids. A solid meal of 800 to 1,000 calories and several snacks (of 100 to 250 calories) before and after my main meal. My last snack is usually about two to three hours before I go to bed. That is a daily grand total of approximately 5,800 calories.
- As you can see eating takes effort, planning, and can be hard work, just like your training, but no less important. To lose weight at the rate of one pound per week, you will need to create a caloric deficit of 500 calories per day, which is a 3,500 calorie deficit across seven days and will lead to one pound of weight loss. Talk to me before doing this!

Recap: So for me at 165 pounds doing one of our **SLOW•STEP** GROUP RIDES. My total caloric needs are 5,000 to 6,000 calories for the entire day. Approximately 2,300 to 3,000 calories burnt from the ride and another 2,700 calories for my BMR (the amount of energy expended daily at rest) and non-cycling daily activities. We can talk about how to best estimate your BMR and the additional calories you are expending.

- Fluids are approximately 250 ounces for the entire day (150 ounces are consumed on the bike and another 110 ounces are my daily fluid requirements without training), if it's a very hot day these numbers can be significantly higher and salt would also be added.
- These food and hydration numbers also apply for THE GROUP HIKES. The group hikes are shorter and will require less over all calories and fluids for the day.
- As always, let me know if you have any questions. Our hikes and rides are great opportunities to talk about nutrition and training, just speak up.

If you have any questions or are interested in signing up for the next **SLOW•STEP** 22-WEEK WINTER TRAINING PROGRAM please contact me at: [vince@slowstepcycling.com](mailto:vince@slowstepcycling.com)