



THE SEVEN HOUR TIME TRIALIST

How to win time trials from 10 miles to 100 miles with
7 hours training a week

Get close to your genetic potential with an average of one hour's training a day.

Focus your energies in the training that matters and ditch the rest.

Have a full trophy cabinet and a full life outside of cycling.

See improvements year in year out. This is not a quick fix guide!

By John Morgan

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INTRODUCTION

Do you ever feel like your performance has reached a plateau and that the only way you could improve further would be to pack in your job and live the life of a cycling monk?

Do you often feel guilty that you should be doing more training miles or hours and then when you do feel guilty that you are neglecting other areas of your life?

When you're out on a long three or four hour ride in the rain, wind and cold does your mind often wander to all the other things you could be doing with your time?

Has training become boring and monotonous – just another chore on your long to do list?

Do you wish there was a magic training formula that that could see you improve year in year out and reach your genetic potential of just seven hours training a week?

If you can answer yes to two or more of these questions then this book could be just the thing you've been looking for. I will show you clearly and simply without you needing a degree in quantum physics how you really can have it all.

It is possible to fit and fast and powerful on a bike with on average just an hour's effort a day. That's not really that big an investment of your time. It's just a whisker over four percent of the week in fact. That's going to leave plenty of time for playing with the kids, socialising, having a career, writing that first novel or simply staring out of the window while picking your nose. You get the idea.

This is not a quick fix book either. It's not all about three months of sessions that are so brutal they make your eyes bleed followed by 3 weeks of half decent form and then right back to square one again. This book is about how to make constant, consistent progress year in year out until you reach your full potential. It really is possible!

If you can't answer yes to two or more of these questions then I'm afraid this book is not for you. I guess you are someone who wants to dedicate pretty much every minute of their life to the bike at the expense of family, friends, career and just plain old fun.

Well fair play to you I say but that's not for me. Not when there's an easier way.

More is always better! Or is it?

“You get out of this life what you put in!”

“Nothing in life is achieved without hard work and sacrifice!”

“Lunch is for wimps!”

“If you want to get promoted always be first in the door in the morning and last out in the evening!”

I could go on but you get the idea don't you? Deep down we all equate hard work with success and if you want to excel at something then you must work as hard as you possibly can. It's bred into us from the moment we start school till pretty much the day we die.

Well I don't buy it. Not any more anyway. There is a big difference between being productive and being busy. Putting a lot of effort into something that isn't that important doesn't make that thing important. The real key to success in training and in life is to pour your efforts into the key areas that give you the maximum returns and simply ditch everything else.

Always think **Focused Effort** not **Effort for Efforts Sake**.

This book is all about how to apply this to your training. The great God of kung fu and king of cool Bruce Lee (1940-1973) knew all about focused effort. He developed something called the one inch punch. Through sheer focus of energy and will he could generate so much power into a punch that only travelled one inch that he could knock a fifteen stone bruiser on his back.

You'll soon be doing the same thing to your rivals!

Training and money are not the same!

Sometimes in life more really is better. If I kept stuffing money into my bank account then eventually I would be very rich and as my old Dad always said “you can never have enough money Son”.

If I pull up lots of weeds in my garden then my garden will have no weeds and will look really good. It's no good applying focused effort here and just pulling up lots of weeds in one place. There really is no easy way out. Unless of course you pay someone else to do it!

Does training fall into this category? Is it like putting money in the bank? Well not quite. A better analogy for training would be like filling a pint glass with beer.

You pour the lovely dark brown or golden, depending on your tastes nectar into the glass until it's a perfect pint of loveliness with a nice white foaming head. It's perfect. If it was only half full it wouldn't be perfect and if you kept pouring more and more in then you'd just end up with a sticky mess on the floor.

There is such a thing as an optimum training load. The word optimum means “the best”. When something is in an optimum state just like a perfect pint of beer it

can't be improved by adding or taking away from it. It's simply perfect just as it is.

I have been a competitive cyclist for 15 years during which time I have won over 80 races against the clock from 10 miles to 12 hours. Over that 15 years there have been periods where I have not done very much training and not been very good and periods where I have done lots and lots of training and not been very good either. Sometimes I have managed to do just the right amount (the optimum) amount of training and I've been really good (well for me).

Looking back now with an experienced eye over those 15 years has shown me where those peaks are and where I was pretty much at my genetic potential. Of course at the time it's difficult to know. Just like your dear old Granny or a favourite pair of cycling shoes you only appreciate the form of your life once it's gone.

For that last seven years I have made my living as a professional cycling coach and have coached many hundreds of riders over that time. Just as with my own training I have observed when riders go really well and when they do not.

I have yet to find a rider who reaches their best level simply from doing as much training as they can possibly manage. More often than not if you try this approach as a coach results will go down the tubes and you will quickly find yourself sacked and your name will be mud on numerous cycling forums.

I have certainly seen riders go well off lots and lots of training. I've often coached people who have taken early retirement or a career sabbatical and have all the time in the world to train and recover. By carefully ramping up their training load we've managed to undertake a pretty fearsome amount of training without the rider getting ill.

By and large we've seen good race results and power numbers on the back of this approach but objectively nothing significantly better than before the load was stepped up.

Always ask are they good because of what they do or despite it?

When I was just starting out in the world of competitive cycling I looked up to a former pro who was in our club who I will refer to as Mr X. He was still only in his early thirties and still a force on the domestic scene. His training rides were legendary. Every year his preparation for the season to come followed the same tried and tested methods. Invariably this would include a hard 100 miles plus ride on a Saturday backed up with another on the Sunday not to mention probably in the region of another 150 in the week around work.

He was a hell of a rider and he needed a wheel barrow to collect all his trophies at the end of the season. Of course we lesser mortals thought that to be like him we had to copy what he did and many tried. Many is the "training ride" or "trial of

pain and suffering beyond belief’’ as I liked to call them that I would finish on my knees fit for nothing for days at the hands of Mr X.

I realise now that if ever a rider showed any kind of promise in our club Mr X would soon start to invite them out on his training rides. After a few months the promising rider would no longer be very promising. Mr X was a master at eliminating any potential rivals before the season had even started!

One day Mr X found himself in the disconcerting position of being very short on training time. He had bought into a business which required all the hours God sent and he had become a father for the first time.

The traditional 350 miles a week was slashed down to 150 and the shortfall had to be made up by more intensity. He told everyone who would listen that it would likely be his last season and there was simply no way he would be able to compete at his previous level of such limited time. This was very true as it turned out as he actually improved!

I love to read about the epic training hours that the professionals put in. I always ask myself what would happen if they did a third of that training time. Would they be as good? Of course we will never know because no professional worth their salt would ever have the guts to try.

Why seven hours a week?

So over my years of observing myself, hundreds of other guinea pigs and of course the mysterious Mr X I discovered a trend. When riders consistently (this is an important word which we’ll discuss in depth later) trained six to eight hours a week they tended to reach what appeared to be their best level. Continuing improvements were also seen on a yearly basis. Training less than this would result in reasonable fitness but not top form.

When riders trained a lot more than this it was difficult to clearly see good continual development. Often a rider would have a really good few weeks and then they’d get ill or demotivated and they’d end up right back where they started.

Of course every rider is unique and every rider has their own training volume threshold that they can handle. I have not yet encountered a rider however who has gone significantly faster from doing more than around seven hours per week.

The law of ever diminishing returns

So far we have just talked about training hours. It goes without saying that what you do in those hours is critical. Just bumbling around the lanes aimlessly at a low intensity for seven hours a week is not really going to achieve much more than a healthy glowing complexion.

What I've discovered though is that if you have a rider who is training correctly in their seven hours doing twice as much of that correct training is not going to make much difference.

Let's go back to our analogy of comparing training to a perfect pint of beer. Imagine an effective training hour is a pint. Somebody for reasons best known to themselves decides to throw the pint all over you. You'd be quite wet. Then they threw another over you. You'd be wetter still. After five more pints of beer you'd be soaked to the skin. Now if another seven pints were thrown at you would you be any wetter? The answer is, not that you'd notice.

Training is just the same. Do it properly, following the strategies I will reveal to you in the coming pages and seven hours is all you'll need. This is an example of the "Law of Ever Diminishing returns".

If you're training badly in the first place then doing a lot more hours would be effective. Each training hour would be more like a half pint and after seven of those certain parts of your anatomy would likely be quite dry and it might take at least another seven before you were suitably soggy.

Doing more of something that's not effective in the first place though does not magically make it effective. Riders who excel off high volume training plans have simply mastered the art of being ineffective. Leave them to it I say!

The benefits of training for seven hours a week

Even the busiest of people with hectic work and family lives can still just about find the time to train for seven hours a week. It works out at just an hours training a day which can always be shoe horned in somewhere if you want to do it badly enough. Of course it doesn't mean that you HAVE to train for an hour a day. Some days you may do three hours, some days two and some days none at all.

Seven hours though is achievable whichever way you look at it and it's still going to leave plenty of time left over to have a life too. Even if you have time to train for more than seven hours a week it's extremely liberating to know that you don't actually have to!

Guilt is something I come across time and time again in my job. If I had a pound for every time I've heard "But I feel I should be doing more hours / miles / intervals / things that generally make me feel worthy" well I'd probably have enough for a new bike. Well a couple of tyres maybe.

Wouldn't it be nice to train for seven hours a week and know for sure that doing more definitely wouldn't make any meaningful difference? You could spend all that time where you would have been feeling guilty reading a book, taking your significant other out for a meal or simply staring through the window at the neighbour's cat. The world would be your oyster.

Summary

- More is not always better. The key is focused effort. Think about Bruce Lee's one inch punch
- Always strive for the optimum training load, not simply doing as much as you can
- Are riders good because of the training they do or despite it? Just because someone is good and they do a lot of training doesn't mean if they did less training they couldn't be better.
- Always remember that once you train more than seven hours a week, if you are training optimally the potential gains are very, very small. When you are soaking wet with beer, you just can't get any wetter.
- By investing just an hour's worth of effort a day you can be the best rider you can possibly be and have a life. It is possible.