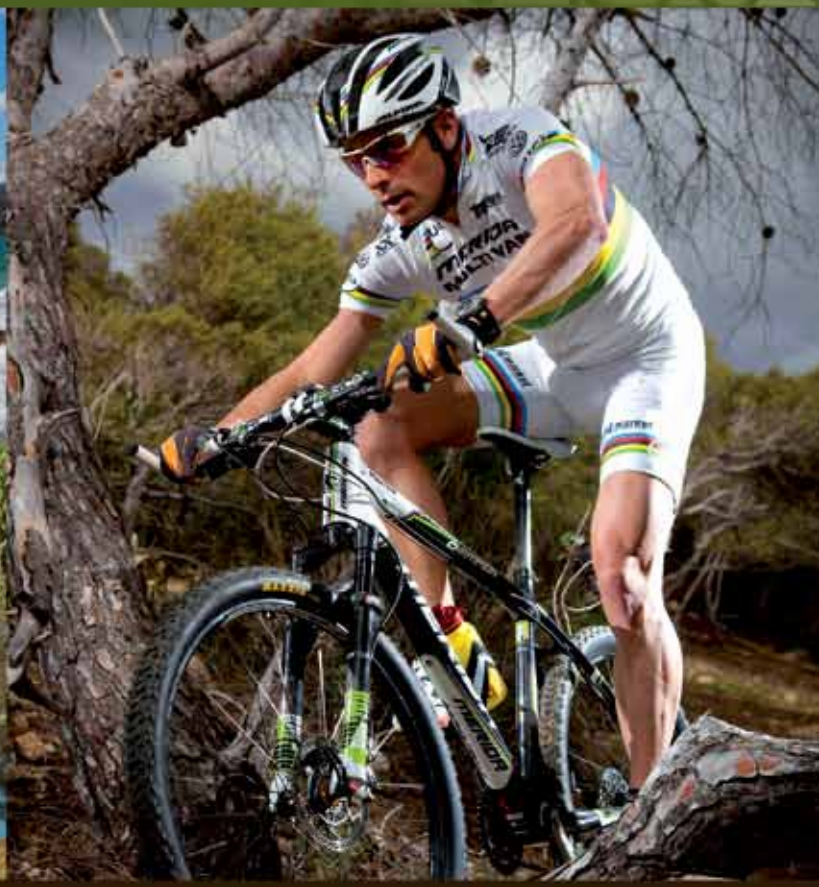
ACHIM SCHMIDT

MOUNTAIN BIKE TRAINING



_TRAINING SCHEDULES FOR THE WHOLE YEAR

_OPTIMIZED TRAINING MANAGEMENT

_STRENGTH & MENTAL TRAINING

MEYER & MEYER SPORT

Achim Schmidt
was born in Cologne, Germany, in 1969, and currently works as a sports scientist in the cycling department at the Institute of Outdoor Sports and Ecology at the German Sport University in Cologne.

He has been actively involved in road and mountain bike racing since 1985. Since 1989 he has been an A-Amateur (category 1) road racing cyclist and he also took part in mountain bike races. He has coached many male and female cyclists. Schmidt has published several papers and books on the subject of cycling and works as a consultant for various clubs and associations in the areas of youth and junior talent development.

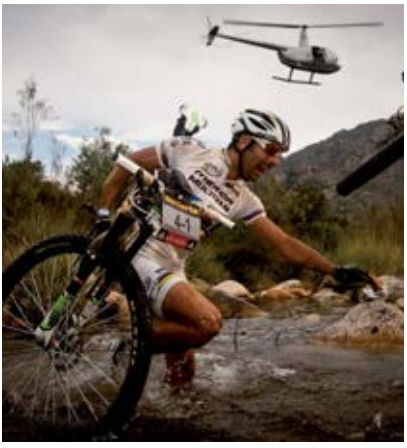
Mountain Bike Training

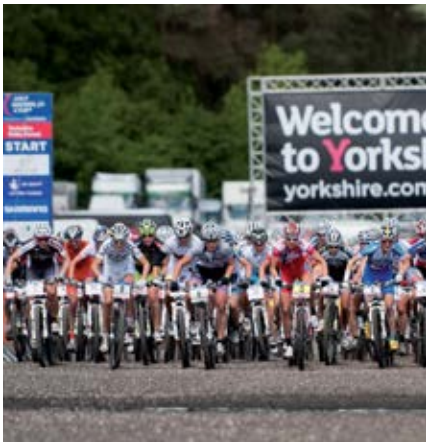
For Marion

Achim Schmidt

Mountain Bike Training

For All Levels of Performance





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1 Introduction

1.1 How to Use This Book

This book is intended for active mountain bikers, whether they take part in races or just do the sport to keep fit, and also for coaches, exercise instructors and physios in competitive mountain biking.

Unlike the many existing mountain bike books that deal with technique or bike repair, this one focuses exclusively on the training for the various performance factors in mountain biking. Cycling technique has already been sufficiently covered in other books and is only addressed in passing in chapter 8, Technique Training, which details the training methods used for practicing the correct techniques.

For a better understanding of the specialized chapters, chapter 2, The Physiology and Anatomy of the Mountain Biker, is particularly recommended for those readers who lack a basic grounding in anatomy and physiology, although subsequent chapters can be understood without this knowledge. Just as important as the physiological and anatomical basics are the basics of training methodology, which are explained at the beginning of each section in chapter 3.

The aim of the book is to enable the reader, once he has studied it in detail, to draw up his own training plan.

The detailed table of contents allows the reader to quickly locate specific topics so that the book can also be used as a reference.

Training Plans

The training plans presented in different chapters are just suggestions, each category designed for an average cyclist. Goals, available training time and personal fitness levels obviously vary from person to person, so it is essential to adapt or correct the plans to suit your own needs. The plans are not intended for elite cyclists, but for the majority of average mountain bikers, whether they do the sport competitively, as a hobby or to keep fit.

As described in chapter 3, the difficulty of training planning and execution increases as performance levels improve. At an elite level, there is a fine line between over- and undertraining, and details can make the difference between peak form and loss of form and, therefore, between victory and defeat.

The beginner should realize that when starting an endurance sport, training progress may be very rapid, but after six to nine months, performance improvement slows down. Several years of planning and regular and consistent training are required just to reach a good regional level, if the rider doesn't already have an endurance background from another sport. This is true for all endurance sports, not just mountain biking.

It is even more difficult in road racing, which is mentioned when the training methods overlap. The races with a peloton lack the individual timing factor of a mountain bike race or a triathlon. Beginners must, as a rule, drop out of the race if they fall behind the peloton, but in mountain biking it is more or less every man for himself.

1.2 Developments in Mountain Biking

The Beginning

When in 1974 the first enthusiasts, notably Gary Fisher and Tom Ritchey, started riding down the mountains around Mount Tamalpais near San Francisco on old, classic cruisers, they had no idea of the boom that would follow with the invention of the mountain bike. A little later, these enthusiasts added gears to their bikes, thus creating the first genuinely off-road mountain bikes. Now they could not only ride down the mountains, but go back up again under their own steam. At the end of the 1970s, the first mountain bikes were produced in large quantities in sunny California. Almost immediately afterward, the first industrial production centers were moved to Southeast Asia, and thanks to greater quantities and lower prices, mountain bikes also took the European market by storm. The modern components giant Shimano also underwent a boom thanks to countless technical mountain bike innovations.

The first mountain bike races on Mount Tamalpais were downhills with a mass start, and cross-country and uphill races were soon added. In 1990, the sport of mountain biking was officially recognized by the world association, the UCI (Union Cycliste Internationale), and the first World Cup was launched in 1991. Prior to this, from 1987 to 1990, there had been three years of two competing World Championships organized by two associations.

In addition to the above-mentioned races, you can also enter dual slaloms and various trial, fun and stunt competitions as well as speed biking races, in which speed records are attempted.

The development of the mountain bike has not only had an impact on competition, but also on health, leisure and hobby activities. Cycling has experienced a boom that shows no sign of tailing off. In fact, the bicycle as transportation is even increasing in popularity due to environmental and traffic problems.

Cruisers were the forerunners of mountain bikes.

What is the special appeal of mountain biking?

Mountain biking's all-terrain suitability allows riders to find their own path off the beaten track. It appeals to the spirit of discovery in all of us. It is exciting to explore an area that you have previously only traveled through by car and find hidden areas of natural beauty. The slower speed of the mountain bike allows you to really get close to nature on small trails and paths away from the busy roads where you can explore and actively experience beautiful countryside.

As greater distances can be covered by bike than on foot, even remote places can be reached in a day. You can stop at any time to rest, look around and enjoy the view. On long rides, which may even push you to the limit of your performance, in the perfect and back-to-basics environment you may rediscover forgotten feelings such as hunger and thirst. The feeling of sinking exhausted onto your bed after a hard day's cycle is another undeniable highlight of a new attitude to life.

As well as all these rather obvious attractions, we can also add the thrill of a fast downhill ride and the feeling of gliding—similar to skiing—that the biker always rediscovers in the mountains. The difficulty of riding down a narrow trail against the resistance of gravity and centrifugal force, or using all one's strength and skill to negotiate a steep incline, are sensations that excite bikers and keep them coming back for more.

Stunts and Trial

Playing with gravity is particularly fascinating for youngsters, who are unfortunately less and less excited by cross-country racing with its harsh training demands, and who prefer to endlessly practice stunts and tricks. Jumps over natural obstacles and DIY ramps, fast downhill rides in disused quarries and bomb craters and trial manoeuvers over old cars and on steps cast a magical charm over young bikers. They invest all their pocket money in the newest parts and the right gear and spend the whole day on their bikes with no desire to go racing at all.

A Healthy Sport for All

The sales figures for mountain bikes show clearly that the sport of mountain biking is definitely not just for elite racers. Only a small fraction of the bikes purchased are used for racing; the overwhelming majority is used for everyday off- and on-road riding.

Off-road mountain biking is a great sport for families with children because they can experience nature without being endangered by traffic. Driving often for miles at the weekend with the bikes on the car roof instead of riding there by bike is not ideal. Even right next to cities there are usually great locations that can be directly accessed by bike.

The environment should be respected, and mountain bikers should remain on tracks and paths to avoid disturbing the vegetation cover and wild animals in their shelters.

Mountain biking is a stimulating activity for mind and body as a keep-fit and rehab sport. The high number of gears on mountain bikes makes it easy to select the correct exercise intensity. Biking is also demanding in terms of coordination. Longer rides at low intensity on relatively flat terrain are an experience that every keep-fit cyclist can handle. An upright, but not stiff, sitting position and, if possible, a suspension fork or a full suspension bike will considerably enhance the comfort while riding.

Competitive Mountain Biking

The mountain racing scene has evolved from its initial stages when it was dominated by ex-racing cyclists and enthusiasts, and nowadays many mountain bikers are completely new to the sport.