



50 MILE RIDE

RIDE PREP TIPS

FROM COACH CRAIG

The Rwanda Ride is just around the corner. I have been asked by many “how do I prepare for this endurance ride?” Well, the single smartest thing you can do is increase your single day ride hours. By doing this, you will learn about how you, your bike, and the actual course will best operate on ride day. A long recon ride will eliminate unpleasant surprises, and you will have a blast come ride day! Let’s look briefly at a few things you’ll discover.

When? Designate one endurance training day per week for the next 7 weeks. This is a “long recon ride” that can be done early Saturday morning. The pace should be very moderate as you are simply looking to ride the same hours as the event. If you are already riding that many hours, perhaps your pace will be higher. The point is, you really should shy away from increasing both volume and intensity at the same time. Just get the single ride volume up to your estimated Rwanda ride time once a week. Saturday morning is ideal as it mimics the Rwanda ride time and day. Your body will acclimate to this schedule and it actually makes quite a difference in how you “feel” on ride morning! The 50 mile ride goes off at 7:00 AM and the 25 mile ride goes off at 9:00 AM, so you guys can practice proper ride time for the next 7 weeks! Seriously, adjust your biological clock to optimize your preparation.

What do I eat? Now here is a question I get frequently so let me sink my chops into it here with you. While on your long recon rides, I recommend a bottle per hour and at least 250 calories per hour at an aerobic pace. If you are HAMMERING it (it is a fun ride, but...) then you can easily eat 500 cals per hour and a little more than a bottle per hour. So what do I put in my bottle and what kind of Gu, Gel, Chomp, or Chunk is the best?? Take a trip down to your local Project Rwanda Sponsoring Bike shop and start experimenting with what they have there. Your long training ride will distill what works for you and what does not. If you go with a caloric rich powder in your bottle, make sure you’re running a water-only bottle (or Camelback) along with your ride “cocktail” bottle. As far as the 250 calorie gels and chomps, man, find one that tastes good and is EASY (not sticky) to eat while you are rolling down the trail. There are rest stops on the ride that will have snacks and liquids from the sponsors you see on the Rwanda website. I recommend trying the supported fuels in TRAINING prior to the event to ensure they work for you. Far too many have depreciated their ride experience by eating something that may not work for them. Bottom line, learn what works for you and stick with it.

Is my bike supposed to be making that noise? Oh the things you discover when you spend time with your bike! Drive train may be clattering and shifting might not be perfect. Your brakes might rub and/or your tires/rims/hubs may need attention to work optimally. Quite honestly, nothing can ruin a fun ride faster than troublesome equipment. Train on the same bike you are going to do the ride on! You will get to know your equipment and what it may need to be running optimally. The good news is you’ll know far ahead of time if your bike needs attention and this will allow you to get it handled prior to the event day. Also as a general rule of thumb, if your bike just came out of the shop you should ride it a few times prior to your event. I have come to appreciate that freshly tuned bikes often have kinks that are best identified on a training ride. Lastly, if your ride needs professional attention, please consider supporting the various sponsors of the Rwanda effort by using them. After all, many have contributed heavily to the event we have come to love, and would appreciate your reciprocal support.

On long rides you will discover the course. Every off road course is more fun the second or third time through because you know what to expect. Each trail has its own ride lines, speed, and braking flow to it. No surprises equals a great time on the Rwanda Ride!

My last comment is about rest. Regular rest ensures optimal adaption. You get stronger when you sleep! That is when your body recovers and repairs. So treat your regular rest seriously. Another comment on rest is getting a lot of it the week before your Rwanda ride. You should carefully structure your intensity and lower your over-all ride volume during the week before the ride. Fun rides are best when you are FRESH, so freshen up the week before.

I appreciate that these comment are very general, but I sincerely hope they assist you in your best preparation. By simply adding one endurance day to your training weeks you will know the course, know your capabilities, know your bike, and even know what to eat! The only thing left to do is have a great time and enjoy making a difference! See you on the Rwanda Trail!



Craig Hopps is the founder and owner of Efficiency Coaching in Orange County CA. Craig was a national level competitive swimmer for 14 years. He competed in both cycling and swimming at UCSB from 1983-1988. From 1988-1992 Craig raced in both Professional and Amateur Triathlons and was consistently ranked in the top 10 nationally. Craig’s passion for peak fitness has seen him training for the last 34 years. He has coached full age group swim teams, cyclist, and multi sport athletes. Today you might find Craig at the start line of a mountain bike race, road race, or even a multi sport event. He doesn’t just coach, he lives it!