

Group Health STP 2009 Training for One or Two-Day Riders

By Craig Udem, Dean of Cycle University www.CycleU.com

Time to get ready for the STP and this is the place to start.

There are a few key things to focus on in preparing for a big ride like the STP: #1 ride your bike. #2 ride your bike and you can probably guess #3. There are people who show up and ride the STP with little training and they barely finish and have trouble walking for a week after the ride (or worse) and then there are those who prepare and have a fantastic ride, enjoy all the thrill and satisfaction of a great ride and dance the night away in Portland. The purpose of this training guide is to help you become the later and enjoy the lifetime benefits of cycling.

As most of you know, to become a good cyclist you need to pay some dues! Like learning to snow ski or play tennis it takes practice, good skills and more practice. To help you learn quickly there is a Full training plan and a free series of rides called the Cascade Training Series that is the ideal combination to get you ready.

The Full STP Training Plan gives you a detailed day-by-day training, including how hard to ride, rest days, final preparation and techniques to help you improve quickly. It dovetails with the weekly Cascade Training Series that begins in March and gradually increases distance and is lead by experienced Ride Leaders for all ability levels. If you want the fast track to improvement and better riding on the STP, plan on attending the Cascade training series <http://www.cascade.org/cts> and sign up for the Full STP Training program at www.CycleU.com under Training Plans.

How to prepare for the Group Health STP - If you read no further in this article, these are the three simplest ways to insure a great time on the STP:

- 1. Ride with others.** Take a cycling skills class at Cycle University and do the Cascade Training Series to learn the language of group cycling and get comfortable riding with other people.
- 2. Don't ride as hard as you can on every training ride.** This is the most common rookie mistake! Ride steady and aim to add more miles each week to go longer and longer. Make some days hard, but most of them steady and moderate.
- 3. Apply Chamois Butt'r or Bodyglide** (found at all good bike shops) to your shorts to reduce friction where you meet the saddle, and don't wear underwear (this is pretty basic but can make a huge difference if you don't know about it!)

The most important part of any cycling training plan are the miles you will ride on a daily and weekly basis in the months leading up to a big ride like the STP. These training rides are the building blocks that will prepare your body and mind to ride long and hard on the day of the event. There are many other factors that will influence your enjoyment on the big day, such as how your bike fits you, nutrition, hydration, clothing, equipment, mental preparation, skill level, riding with other people etc... This overview covers only the riding mileage.

If you haven't ridden a bike in 10 years, start with a 5-mile ride to get the hang of it. Your goal may be simply to have fun and stop when you are tired. If you had a good summer of riding last year and haven't ridden since October, go out for a nice flat 20-miler and get back into it. From here build up your mileage gradually and challenge yourself a bit more every few weeks.

Remember why you are doing this. No one does the STP as a professional cyclist, we are all regular people having a good time on our bikes. Although there is a lot to learn when you are new to cycling, keep it fun by learning from more experienced riders, asking a couple friends to join you, or making it a challenge with some co-workers to see who will finish first (or dance the latest after the ride!). Although having fun may seem like child's play, if you aren't having fun you will probably find something else to do, so find a way to make it enjoyable!

Take your time and work at a level your body will allow. Depending on your conditioning and riding experience, you may need more or less miles than this program presents. Feel free to consult Cycle University to outline a custom program to fit your level of riding and athletic background, and be sure and get an OK from your doctor if you are over the age of 30 and new to cycling.

Start your training with moderate to easy miles and add an occasional hard day once every week or two where you push the hills. After the first half of the training, start looking at your average speeds during your midweek and Saturday rides. Increase the midweek rides to move toward your target average miles per hour pace. (to complete the 204-mile STP in one day under 12 hours you will need to average 17.5 mph and only take one 30-minute break. Two-day riders will need to average 10 mph to finish each 103-mile day under 11 hours, with 55 minutes of breaks each day.) Aim to get your average speed near your target ride level or higher as the event approaches on shorter rides.

June should be your hardest month. Plan to take good care of yourself between rides. Eat right, stay hydrated and get consistent sleep. Use Flying Wheels as your final rehearsal. Test out the energy foods, equipment and clothing you will use on the STP (be warned, Flying Wheels is a hilly challenge!) During the final two weeks you will rest more because the mileage is much less, but keep your rides at or above event speeds.

Special note for One-Day Riders

Most people think that they can just ride lots of miles and get fast enough to do the STP in one day, but what many find is that even though they get strong and increase their average speed they still can't meet their goal. Why? **Drafting.** They need the shelter of other people to help them achieve their finishing goal. The wind often blows from the south, which means that much of the ride from Seattle to Portland is into a head wind, and if you ride behind a group or even a single rider, you can save 30% or more of your energy and still go the same speed. It is something that takes practice and good coaching to do it safely. The best place to learn this is from a Cycle University Road 101 Class or another experienced rider. Drafting helps for 2-day riders too.

Ride smart and learn good safe riding habits. Make it a great ride and we hope to see you on the dance floor in Portland!

Basic Training Schedule

TWO - DAY RIDERS

WEEK OF:	Weekly Goal	MON	TUE	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT	SUN	Weekly Total
Feb. 16 - 22	53			10			10	*33	
Feb. 23 - March 1	60			20			20	20	
March 2 - 8	80			20			30	30	
March 9 - 15	100			20			40	40	
March 16 - 22	80			20			30	30	
March 23 - March 29	100			20			40	40	
March 30 - April 5	120			20			50	50	
April 6 - 12	130			30			50	50	
April 13 - 19	90			20			50	20	
April 20 - 26	130			30			50	50	
April 27 - May 3	140			20			60	60	
May 4 - 10	170			30			70	70	
May 11 - 17	110			30			50	30	
May 18 - 24	170			30			70	70	
May 25 - 31	180			20			80	80	
June 1 - 7	140			20			60	60	
June 8 - 14	180			45			**65 or 100	70 or 30	
June 15 - 21	120			30			50	40	
June 22 - 28	140			30			90	20	
June 29 - July 5	100			20			50	30	
July 6 - 12	224			20			102	102	

* Chilly Hilly ride and ** Flying Wheels Summer Century

ONE - DAY RIDERS

WEEK OF:	Weekly Goal	MON	TUE	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT	SUN	Weekly Total
Feb. 16 - 22	63			20			10	*33	
Feb. 23 - March 1	70			20			30	20	
March 2 - 8	80			20			40	20	
March 9 - 15	70			20			30	20	
March 16 - 22	90			30			50	10	
March 23 - March 29	110			20			70	20	
March 30 - April 5	110			30			50	30	
April 6 - 12	130			40			70	20	
April 13 - 19	120			20			80	20	
April 20 - 26	140			40			70	30	
April 27 - May 3	190			50			80	60	
May 4 - 10	160			50			90	20	
May 11 - 17	170			30			100	40	
May 18 - 24	160			40			70	50	
May 25 - 31	190			50			110	30	
June 1 - 7	130			30		10	70	20	
June 8 - 14	210			40		20	**100	50	
June 15 - 21	140			40			70	30	
June 22 - 28	200			50			100	50	
June 29 - July 5	120			40			60	20	
July 6 - 12	234			20		10	204	0	

* Chilly Hilly ride and ** Flying Wheels Summer Century

Flying Wheels offers the STP rider a chance to test your equipment, skills and train on a fantastic course at the perfect time to peak for the STP. The scenic 25-, 45-, 65- and 100-mile routes begin and end in Redmond. Information on-line at: www.cascade.org or call (206) 522-BIKE. Training related questions please contact www.CycleU.com or (800) 476-0681.

Craig Udem has graced the cover of Velonews, won the Washington State Criterium and Cyclocross championships, represented the US in the World Championships of Cyclocross and in two Tour of El Salvador stage races. He has been a full time professional cycling coach since 1997. He completed the STP in one day in 1985, and went on to race at the elite level internationally for 10 years. He started Cycle University to help riders like you achieve your dreams of better health and enjoyment through cycling. He and his team of coaches offer a wide array of services including indoor classes in the winter and outdoor bootcamps and classes April through October. Check them out at: www.CycleU.com or call 1-800-476-0681.

Consult your doctor before beginning any kind of endurance training program.