



## **Time Trials and Triathlon.**

We have all witnessed the performances of elite athletes on the “time trial” bikes. Positioning tends towards the extreme as the elite athlete attempts to compress himself into a “sausage casing” to minimize aerodynamic drag; the process is judged to be successful when aerodynamic gains are apparent and the expected power output is maintained. The unappreciated assumption is that the movement pattern is directly responsible for the power output in the first place. When all the pieces fit well together the result is a good outcome.

The current dogma is therefore to position the amateur athlete in the extreme just like the elite without an understanding of who they are as athletes, needs and limitations. The amateur follows the instructions everybody is aware of: remain perfectly still, conserve energy and rely solely on the legs; which is completely at odds with the manner in which elite athletes perform. Unlike the elite athlete, the amateur generally lacks a sufficiently well defined movement pattern to allow him to adapt to the new position and so they tend towards an ineffective and unstable performance. No technological advances will make up for issues related to a “Movement Pattern”.

Next time you watch an elite athlete in a time trial, wait for the camera to pan from behind and focus on the well choreographed body movements. Gain a sense for the rhythm of weight shifting on the “aeropads” and the action in the upper trunk and pelvis that follows. Does this fit with what the announcers are telling you? Want to see the athlete suffer and look very uncomfortable? Take a look at them while climbing off the saddle when the hand grips are set low, they can barely reach those. For the most part, elite athletes prefer on their standard bikes for time trials that are climbing intensive, and for good reason.

How well will you do in a time trial? This depends on your natural abilities and on the foundation you have laid out. If your movement pattern is sound on your road bike, then you might expect a brief period of adaptation on the time trial bike. If on the other hand, your movement pattern is filled with “swiss cheese” holes, you will need help. Part of the challenge may be to break a lengthy history of bad habits. Endurance and timing of the entire sequence of the movement pattern is what matters; importantly, as this applies to you. These apparently simple tasks will require significant mental and physical effort. Use those “base miles” to learn at your own pace and earn your stripes for later on in the summer. You are already working hard; it’s not that, the point is to learn and reinforce an effective movement pattern. Take a look at the recommendations throughout the web site and begin with the tasks outlined in the Performance Movement Patterns in Cycling-Video Collection on in Dartfish TV. More importantly, keep the long view on the sport. No different from any other activity.

Work with a coach to implement your movement pattern, and resolve your individual issues. Find out how you perform on your road bike, do you gravitate towards the Trunk Pelvic Roll or the Sidebend Hip Hike? Then develop that skill set to the point at which you can recognize each detail of the movement and be able to discuss that with the coach. Identify the most important details you need to work on. When you are comfortable with the way you perform, it may be time to test the waters with a time trial bike, listen to your skill set and replicate that. The point is continual skilled improvement regardless of what you ride.

The Performance Movement Patterns in Cycling-Video Collection has a number of performances which range from “Proficient” to “Unstable” which might help frame your situation. You may be able to see yourself in these performances and identify areas for improvement. The variety riding styles is remarkable, think that the sport currently relies on a “one size fits all” approach.

As an amateur athlete or enthusiast, wouldn't it be more fun and worthwhile to improve on your very own technique, work out with greater purpose and see tangible improvements? Reaching a higher level performance can involve conquering that long strip of road on your weekly ride or doing something special at the next event.

If you treat cycling as a sport; then the “Movement Patterns” are your top priority. Think about athletes in other sports, they are in a constant mode of improvement and understanding of who they are as performers. They learn new skills, tweak details of their craft but through it all they remain true to the fundamentals of their sport.

“Don't be trapped by dogma, which is living with the results of other peoples' thinking”. Steve Jobs.