



By Coach Tim Edwards, USAT L2, USAC L2, ASCA L2

Regardless if you are a veteran, elite, or beginner athlete, there are many reasons why you should continue your coaching during the offseason.

## **Minimize Fitness Loss**

Most importantly, employing a coach year round allows you to minimize the loss of fitness you worked so hard to gain during the previous season, not burn out early in the new season (saving injury and sometimes sickness), and address limiters that were holding you back from being the best athlete you can be.

Some athletes are keen to cost cut over the winter and free style their training. The lack of structure may be good for a mental refresh but too much of it for too long can release that hard earned fitness. It is much harder to regain it than it is to not lose it in the first place.

## **Build Strength**

Strength is a major component to not getting injured during the season. Winter is the time to get that part of your fitness built up. Coaches can plug you into group activities that motivate you to show up early in the morning or when it is really cold out and still knock out that vital interval session.

## **Over Training**

The Northern latitudes make it necessary to spend some time indoors to avoid the worst weather. Your coach can employ a technique called reverse periodization in which you build your aerobic engine with intervals, speed work, and strength training during the winter. When the weather does finally break in the spring, you are ready with excellent fitness to add in a mix of long steady distance aerobic rides and runs to sharpen your fitness to race fitness. Trying to do this on your own is difficult as it is easy to overdo it and enter a state of over training, sickness, or injury.

## **Panic Training**

Once the weather breaks, it is normal for self-coached athletes to panic train as their event gets closer and they spent the winter hibernating. Once again, this can lead to sickness and injury if they are not prepared for the intensity and duration.

## **Weight Management**

The off season is also a time where you can work with your registered dietitian and your coach to lose weight if that is one of your goals. The winter hibernation cycle leads to an early season where you are trying to cut weight just when you need the extra nutrients to support the higher level of activity required in your training.

## **Consistency & Accountability**

Having a daily, weekly, and monthly goal to achieve will keep you accountable to yourself, your coach, and your training partners. It is so easy to roll over and hit snooze when it is dark and cold in the morning. Knowing your coach is tabulating your results and your training partners are waiting will get you out

the door. Don't be that guy (or gal) that asks their coach why they did not reach their race goal when they hibernated during the winter. Coaches put you in position to succeed not wave the magic wand.

## **Time to Reflect**

The off season is a great time for you to talk over the season with your coach, determine what your limiters were during the season, what your new goals are, and spend some time looking back on a successful season. If it was not successful, that may be a red flag as to why you need a year round coach.

## **Variety and Active Rest**

After a hard season, you need to rest mentally and physically. After that initial time "off" it is time to get back into it but a coaching plan during the off season will allow you to explore other sports or disciplines that you may not have considered. Many of our athletes get a chance to XC ski, snowshoe, indoor row, hike, cyclocross or mountain bike, and other stimulating and relaxing endeavors. You are enjoying trying something new but not realizing that you are developing fitness that will strengthen and injury proof you when the season hits and it is time to hit it out of the park.

## **Conclusion**

As you can see, the added expense of full year coaching actually saves you money, prevents burnout, increases the quality of fitness and race speed throughout the season, leads to successful outcomes, and makes you a happier athlete. We strongly encourage you to continue coaching during the off season and the individualized coaching plans we offer fit that bill. After all, you hired a coach in the first place to get better not worse.

**If you are still not convinced, try out the off season plan where you get a general plan to keep you on track but lose the individual aspect from your coach until spring has sprung. With this in place, you will at least avoid hibernation and be ready for more intense workouts under the warm sun.**

Coach Tim is the owner and head coach of North Coast Endurance Coaching and West Coast Endurance Coaching. He is a Level 2 coach in triathlon, cycling, and swimming. He has been coaching for over 20 years with his athletes achieving excellent results domestically and internationally. He can be reached at [coachtim@ncecoaching.com](mailto:coachtim@ncecoaching.com).