VeloSano Training Guide

“The Weekend Warrior”

By Dr. Michael Schaefer

This guide includes suggestions for training for the VeloSano Bike to cure event of your chosen distance. If you are new to bicycling, I suggest reading the following article for background information, safety tips, and injury prevention:

http://health.clevelandclinic.org/2013/08/how-to-get-back-to-bicycling/

This plan will get you ready for your VeloSano ride with minimal time and energy commitment. The Weekend Warrior schedule is not really the “Right” way to do it, but hey, I realize everyone has busy lives with limited time and this plan will help get you ready mentally and physically to enjoy your VeloSano experience. With just two workouts per week, you can be ready for all but maybe the longest VeloSano Two-Day route.

The Details

Your rides will basically include one long, slow ride per week and one ride with hills or “intervals”. Intervals are short periods of higher intensity exercise, usually 2 to 5 minutes in length that are separated by rest periods. You should continue riding throughout these sessions, but reduce your pace significantly during the rest periods. Try doing intervals of varying lengths and intensities. A good way to add intensity is to ride into a headwind or up a small hill. You will also notice that one (additional) day per week is designated as a cross-training day. Cross-training is important to prevent injury and burnout. If you’re a true “weekend warrior” you can even do this on the same day as one of the rides. The best cross-training activities are weightlifting, yoga, Pilates, jogging, swimming, or walking.
Commonly Asked Questions

What if I miss a day? Or even a week?
You do NOT have to do extra training. Just simply pick up where you left off on the list of training sessions, OR just restart at today's date on the calendar. Maybe add in one extra session per week if you're ambitious. But you will notice that the one of the weeks in June is designated as an “Easy/Off” week. This time is set-aside to help with recovery but can be used to make up some missed training, or just take a vacation! The beach looks pretty nice that time of year!

How fast should I be going on my slow rides? How about my fast rides?
This depends on your chosen pace. A beginner might go 8 or 10 miles per hour (mph) on their slow rides, and 12 or 14 mph on their fast rides. Advanced riders will be well over 20 mph. Keep in mind that “Easy” rides should feel very EASY – you should be able to talk comfortably and not notice heavy breathing.

To measure time, speed, distance as well as revolutions per minute (rpm) or cadence, consider getting a bike computer. The information this tool provides helps track progress and builds confidence throughout your training. You can also download one of the many popular fitness tracking apps to your smartphone.

Am I allowed to “draft” off of other cyclists?
Drafting is permitted during the VeloSano events, but this can be a dangerous activity. Only practice drafting after you are very comfortable on your bicycle, with experienced cyclists, and only under good conditions. Keep in mind that while you are drafting, you are riding with 20-30% less effort, so you will probably not be gaining as much fitness during this activity as you would if you were riding alone. But if you choose to draft during the event, be sure to practice beforehand. Work on maintaining a smooth steady pedal-stroke, a very straight line, and always looking ahead of your group to anticipate changes in pace. Avoid looking only at the person right in front of you, and avoid slamming on your brakes suddenly!

Do I really need to ride on hills? How steep or long should the hills be?
This depends upon how hilly your event route will be and on what you have available for hills. Check out velosano.org/the-ride to view your route using Ride with GPS for turn-by-turn and elevation details. When in doubt, start with smaller hills and ride up them more slowly. If you do not have hills nearby, try using a freeway overpass, or the road through a small river valley. You may also use a stationary trainer with increased resistance setting, or just ride on a flat road but use a higher gear for a short time. However, if you are preparing for one of the more hilly VeloSano routes, you should drive to a place with large hills at least once during the month of June. There is really no good substitute for the real thing! Also practice going downhill safely, and practice turning and stopping on downhills.

What about nutrition and hydration?
The VeloSano Rest Stops will be well-stocked and well supported, but during your longer training rides, you should carry water or sports drink. For your longer rides (anything over one hour) you should bring a small snack such as an energy bar or some fruit. Be sure to consume familiar food and drinks on the event day, to avoid GI upset.

Which should I do if it is raining?
Riding in the rain can be dangerous, and it is usually not very pleasurable, but it certainly may happen! If you are new to cycling, I suggest that you take a rest day if it is raining, or substitute a walk or jog. Don’t try riding in the rain until you are very comfortable handling your bicycle. However, consider (eventually) doing at least one or two rides on rainy days so you can practice how to handle your bike on slippery roads. Be very cautious on turns, especially on painted surfaces such as crosswalks as they get slippery when wet. Leave extra time for stopping, and have your brakes adjusted so they can be applied very firmly. Dress with an extra layer of clothing or light rain jacket. Don’t ride with dangling clothing items that may become tangled in the wheels or chain. AVOID car traffic on rainy days. They often can’t see you.

Conclusion
We hope you enjoy your VeloSano ride, but also enjoy the process of training for the event. Please ride safely, and always try to have fun. Once you’ve finished this event, we encourage you to pick another athletic goal for the fall or winter, and we hope to see you again next year at VeloSano!
May

**WEEK 1**
- Get out the bike. Have a local bike shop check your fit and do a tune-up. Check velosano.org for offers from local bike shops.
- Slow ride for fun. Ride 15-20 minutes. Stop if needed to adjust saddle position.
- Moderate ride to check fitness; stop just before you get REALLY tired. Make note of how far you could comfortably go. This is your “Baseline” fitness.

**WEEK 2**
- Short ride for just 20 minutes but try a few small hills or intervals. Push the effort for just a minute or two. How does it feel to go fast?
- Cross training.
- Longer slow ride. Pick a fun destination. Take your time and enjoy!

**WEEK 3**
- Moderate-paced short ride.
- Cross training.
- Long, slow ride. Go a bit farther than your longest mileage.

**WEEK 4**
- Intervals: Ride slow to warm-up for 5 minutes, then alternate fast and slow riding for about 15 minutes – 1 minute fast and 2 minutes slow. Repeat 5 times. Finally, ride slow again (cool down) for 5 minutes.
- Cross training.
- Long, slow ride: Not as far as your longest. Practice shifting gears, stopping at stop signs, riding a nice straight line.

**WEEK 5**
- Tempo ride: After short warm-up, ride a moderate to hard pace effort for as many minutes as your “VeloSano ride” is long, up to maximum of 50 minutes. i.e. if you’re doing the 12-mile route, see how far you can go in 12 minutes.
- Cross training.
- Long ride: Try to go longer than ever before.
June

WEEK 1
Tempo ride: After a short warm-up, ride a moderate to hard pace effort for about 20 minutes. This should feel challenging. Pick a time goal (10, 15, or 20 minutes). Try to keep an even pace the whole time or even go slightly faster at the end. Cool down for 5 minutes.

Cross training.

Long, slow ride: Try to go longer than ever before. Maybe twice as far as your first “long” ride. Be sure to bring a snack or some sports drink.

WEEK 2
Recovery week / vacation: Substitute this week anytime in the middle of the schedule.

Ride a little if you’d like to but not hard. Enjoy! Rest more, eat more and sleep more. This is very important for muscle recovery and preventing injury. Take your bike in for a tune-up if you haven’t yet. Shop for some new gear and clothing. Make sure you’ve found some comfortable shorts that you can wear for the “long haul”. Check velosano.org for offers from local bike shops.

WEEK 3
Medium ride: ‘Ease’ back into it after your recovery week. After a nice, slow warm-up (10-15 minutes), ride a moderate pace effort for about 20-30 minutes.

Your legs might be stiff or heavy-feeling from the time off. This is normal, don’t worry. Cool down for 5 minutes.

Cross training: consider adding a “third” ride also? Maybe some short intervals.

Long ride: Try to go longer than ever before again. Hopefully the “Rest” week has made you stronger!

WEEK 4
Hill intervals. After a 10-15 min warm-up, find a suitable hill – one that makes you very tired by the top. Ride it slow the first time. Pick a safe “turn around” spot at least 50 yards past the top of the hill. Turn around and ride down slowly and safely. Do the hill again, this time as fast as possible, but use a low gear—spinning at high RPMs (at least 80/min). Do the hill again, this time in a slightly higher gear, but still focus on spinning/high RPM and standing up on the pedals occasionally. If needed, shift down to a lower gear at the top. If you’re feeling good, keep doing the hill as many times as you’d like. Experiment with different gears, and alternating between standing/sitting. But leave time for a good long cool-down. At least 15 minutes of slow riding.

Cross training. Consider flexibility exercises instead of strength training this week. Your body may need the recovery after the hill intervals. Yoga anyone?

Long ride: About 10% shorter than your longest ride. Nice and SLOW!
July

WEEK 1

Tempo ride (just like May’s Week 5): After short warm-up, ride a moderate to hard pace effort for as many minutes as your “VeloSano ride” is long (up to maximum of 50 minutes – i.e., if you’re doing the 12-mile route, see how far you can go in 12 minutes. If you’re doing the 25-mile route, then go 25 minutes. If you’re doing the 50, 75 or longer routes, go for 50 minutes. Did you go farther than you did in May? How much?

Cross training. Don’t do anything new. It’s too close to VeloSano to risk an injury. Have fun!

Long slow ride: This should be your LONGEST ride of the summer. This time it’s OK to push the pace just a little, but stay cool! Try to avoid that mid-day sun! Treat yourself to a good recovery meal and rest more the next day or two. Eat more, sleep more.

WEEK 2

Hill intervals: similar to June’s Week 4. This will be the MOST difficult ride of the summer. This one should be done EARLY in the week to allow time for recover. VeloSano is only about 1 ½ weeks away! Consider doing it even earlier in the month if you’re an experienced rider. Maybe pick a larger or steeper hill if you weren’t adequately “challenged” last time. Ride a good long warm-up, maybe 20 minutes. Ride the hill slowly the first time, but this time, ACCELERATE at the top! Practice getting back into a rhythm on flat ground at the top of the hill. Push your pace right back up to your average speed on a “tempo” ride. Go for about 2 minutes at this pace and pick a visible “finish line” just before your turn-around point. Ride back down the hill slowly and safely. Do the hill again, this time at a moderate pace, but again accelerate over the crest of the hill and get back up to speed for 2 minutes. Use a low gear -spinning at high RPMs (at least 80/min). Do the hill again and again until you’re almost completely exhausted. If needed, shift down to a lower gear at the top. Accelerate as you crest the hilltop by spinning faster RPMs. Shift to higher gears as you get back up to speed. Again, leave time for a good long cool-down. At least 15 minutes of slow riding.

Cross training. Consider flexibility exercises instead of strength training this week. Your body may need the recovery after the hill intervals. Maybe another yoga session?

Long ride: About 10% shorter than your longest. Nice and SLOW!

WEEK 3 – RIDE WEEK!

Medium ride: ‘Ease’ back into it after recovery. After a nice, slow warm-up (10-15 minutes), ride a moderate pace effort for about 20-30 minutes. Your legs might be stiff or heavy-feeling from the time off. This is normal, don’t worry. Cool down for 5 minutes.

Cross training. Have fun!

Visit your local bike shop to “stock up” for the big ride!

REST, RECOVER. Treat yourself to something you like to eat. Sleep more!

“Shake out” ride: Do a short 15-20 minute ride one or two days before the event. If you’re traveling from out-of-town, do short ride AFTER you arrive in Cleveland. Cruise a Cleveland Metropark Parkway or bike trail. ENJOY!

About the Author

Michael Schaefer, M.D. practices Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation (PM&R) and Sports Medicine at Cleveland Clinic’s Main Campus and at the Westlake Medical Office on Columbia Road. He completed his residency and fellowship at the Mayo Clinic, and worked on the staff at the Mayo Clinic and MetroHealth Medical Center before joining the Cleveland Clinic in 2010. Dr. Schaefer is an accomplished bicyclist. He was team MVP for the Cycling Team at The Ohio State University in 1996, and went on to compete in many national level events. He stopped bicycle racing in 2004 in favor of family activities and triathlons, but he still enjoys bicycling. He currently competes in triathlons for the Spin/Second Sole Multisport team, and also enjoys cross-country ski racing. Dr. Schaefer is a valuable VeloSano ambassador and has been a Rider and Rest Stop Medical Volunteer in all VeloSano events.