Training with a Heart Rate Monitor

Do you need a heart rate monitor perform your best as an athlete? No, but a HRM can be helpful.

HRM are not the sexist training tool, but they are cheap and easy to use. They are helpful for both running and biking.

Buying a HRM is only part of the battle. Now that you have a HRM, what good is it? The first step in getting the most out of your HRM is establishing your HR zones. The "old" method was to work off of your Maximum Heart Rate. A much more useful value is to find your Lactate Threshold (LT). You will have a different LT for running and bicycling.

Finding your LT can be done through a blood Lactate test or through a field test. I will list the protocol below for the field test.

Run:

- Warm up 15 minutes
- Time Trial - Run 20 minutes as fast as possible
- Cool Down 10 minutes

Bike

- Warm up 20 minutes
- Time Trial - Bike 30 minutes as fast as possible
- Cool Down 20 minutes

Your average LT for the Time Trial will be your Lactate Threshold. Now that know your LT, you also know your HR Zones. The next step in getting the most out of your HRM is the start working out in a variety of zones.

Without a solid training plan people tend to work out in low Zone 3. This zone is great for keeping the pounds off and getting in a good work out, but to get closer to your athletic potential you will need to change things up.

To get closer to your athletic potential you will actually want to avoid zone 3 for the most part. Your speed workouts will need to be in high Zone 3 and low Zone 4. Your recovery days will be in Zone 2. In other words, you are either working out really hard or really easy.

Most people work out too hard on their easy days and not hard enough on their hard days. A HRM can help you keep the hard days hard and the easy days easy. This will maximize the benefit you receive from your training.