

Can Strength Training improve your Cycling?

By Jennifer Schumm

As the weather gets colder up, now is the perfect time to start thinking about all the bike rides that you will be taking in the upcoming new year. With a variety of different bike paths and mountainous settings, bike riding in Colorado is both challenging and rewarding. Like any other athletic activity, it's not something that you just want to jump back into. Bike riders from all backgrounds, spanning from recreational to professional, will benefit from one-on-one coaching to help create a regiment that strengthens your body, keeps you safe from injury, and improves your overall experience on your bicycle. Personal trainer Jennifer Schumm describes four areas in the gym to focus on that will pay off when you get on your bicycle.

1. **Working Your Core:** Although you may be inclined to think that your leg strength is the first area to focus on, Jennifer recommends starting with your core area. There's a lot of power in our core, but our brains often don't use them. Often times we tend to be weak in two areas, specifically the psoas and iliopsoas. These areas come into play when you are working on keeping stable and upright on your bicycle. By strengthening these two core areas, your body uses those muscles for power, speed and endurance on the bike. This gives your body an opportunity to engage an area besides your legs, which can build up lactic acid during your ride. By engaging the power from your other muscles, especially your core area, you will end up having a more powerful, sustained ride. A great way to build up your core area is to integrate in TRX exercises, including mountain climbers, pikes, center tucks with side to side tucks, which Jennifer highlights below:

2. **Engaging Your Glutes:** There's a lot of power in our glutes, but we often overlook how important they can be. Strengthening your glutes can also help alleviate imbalances in the pelvis, knees and spine. Think of these muscles as your secret biking weapon. A great way to build up this area is by doing glute hip thrusts, both single and dual leg glute extensions, as Jennifer shows us below. This exercise is beneficial in helping you develop strength and power in your gluteus maximus muscle.

3. **Strengthen your back:** If you think about when you are on the bike hunched over, your shoulders are in and your chest becomes concaved. This is why it's very important to strengthen your back so that you can open up your shoulders and chest. That's not just going to help you on the bike, but includes long term benefits to improving your everyday posture. Two great places to target in your back are your lats and rhomboids. Having a strong back leads to better posture when you are on your bike. This allows you to pull with your upper body when you are out of the saddle climbing, sprinting, and helps you maintain your bike position for long periods of time. Jennifer demonstrates two important exercises that can help you strengthen this area, specifically body weight pull ups and the seated row.

4. **Improve your Upper Body Strength:** opportunity to build up your back consisting of rear delts, lats, rhomboids, and erector spinae. However you need to think of the upper body as a whole and balanced which is why it is important to also train the opposition of the upper body as well, triceps, chest shoulder and biceps. Incorporating in upper body strength training will help you become less

fatigued on your bike ride. You want to be sure to have the upper body strength and endurance to not only maintain your posture on your bike for long rides so that your body and legs become less fatigued, and therefore maintain power speed and position, but also be able to use the upper body when climbing, attacking, sprinting, etc. You can increase your strength through push-ups, pull-ups, or tricep dips, all of these always bodyweight, rear delt raises.

As I have learned from my years as a cyclist and personal trainer, dedicating some time to working on muscle strength before you get out onto your bike will have some long-lasting results. I specialize personal training sessions to my client's needs, so that you can get the very most out of your training sessions. Don't wait until the spring to get started, feel free to email Jenny@fitbyjenny.com to set up a consultation today and get started.