



Training Tips #3

The Alps Epic is in just 2 months and your base preparation is done. Now is not the time to ease off. Your combined efforts will more than reap rewards come race day.

The emphasis of your training will now shift towards a focus on time in the saddle. The Alps Epic is, after all, a marathon event where you will spend a lot of time sat down pedalling. As such, it's important to start putting in some serious kilometres on the bike. During this phase, 4 to 5 rides on your MTB are essential, even if that can be a bit hard to fit around family and work commitments. These rides will prepare you both physically and mentally for longer outings. That said, just piling on the kilometres isn't enough on its own. You need to get some serious height gain in there too. Remember, the daily height gain on the Epic will be over 2000m for a solid week of racing. Riding 70km on the flat is a very different kettle of fish to 70km in the mountains.

So kilometres and climbing, that's what the next month holds in store. Do have a care not to burn yourself out though, either physically or psychologically. Keep your spirits up and pace yourself - two skills that will serve you well during race week as well as during this phase of training. Outwith your mountain biking, try to limit all other sporting efforts to a minimum. If you do want to beast yourself off the bike, just swap out one of your riding sessions and have fun. Boredom really is the enemy here and using another sport to get a good sweat on can be great for your morale. Another great way to avoid boredom is to train with your mates, especially your race partner for the Alps Epic. It's a lot more fun that way.

Finally, an important point that is often overlooked is working on your technique. The Alps Epic race route is both technical and mountainous. Numerous sections demand top notch bike handling. Whilst the skills of Nino Schurter might be out of reach, good bike handling skills will allow you to really make the most of all the incredible singletrack of the Hautes-Alpes. Furthermore, good technical skills will enable you to be at ease on the bike and so to save energy, rather than tensing up and using precious energy up compensating on the techy sections. So remember when ramping up the hours during this phase of training to throw in a good amount of technical riding.



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Here is a basic plan, working around the idea of 5 rides a week :

1st ride of the week	2-3 hrs ride, nothing too severe, on fun trails and keep up a steady rhythm throughout the session.
2 nd ride of the week	2-3 hrs ride with between 1000-1500m climbing. Keep your effort steady on the climbs.
3rd ride of the week	3hrs minimum ride, ideally on technical terrain, both climbing and descending. Take it steady downhill however - big crashes at this time really wont help.
4th ride of the week	The longest ride, at 4hrs minimum in the saddle. Pick a route with the longest climbs and descents possible, a bit like you'll encounter during race week. Alternate fast and fun trails with more technical offerings. Try to work in at least 2000m of climbing.
5th ride of the week	2-3 hours ride with around 1000m of climbing. Prioritise smooth pedalling and avoid over doing it.

As for the timing of these sessions, try to do rides 3, 4 and 5 on consecutive days so as to train yourself to do back to back efforts. This leaves your rest days after the 2nd and 5th rides. If you can only work 4 rides into your schedule, skip the 1st ride, which is there more to set the scene more than the other sessions. Don't forget to work in a decent warm up to each session before you step on the gas. As ever in a marathon event it's better to ride steadily kilometre after kilometre rather than go off with a bang only to find yourself blown up after an hour on the bike.

Finally, as I repeat each time, use this advice as a base to be adapted to your own opportunities, experience and habits. That said, don't skimp on the period of accumulation which must last at least a month. Why not throw a couple of marathon events into the mix ? If you do, go easy in the week leading up to the event. Happy training and happy trails !

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Alps Epic Racers Relation



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