



Conquering the Contact Huka Challenge under the Five and a Half Hour mark.

When Bruce Jaine asked me to do up a program for the 85km Contact Huka Challenge, I felt honoured to be able to help out.

Having completed the event a few times with various gearing configurations or lack of gears over the last few attempts, the Contact Huka Challenge is different from many other mountain bike events.

The Huka does not have the long climbs of Karapoti, or the screaming descents of Rotorua. The longest climb in the Huka will take Weekend Warrior Warren 8-9mins, which is quite short for a one lap race. This however means we don't have huge descents either. For those that are familiar with Rotorua's Chinese menu or the Spaghetti trail in Woodhill, the majority of Taupo trails are like these.

To do well in the Huka it is all about maintaining momentum on the trail. Each corner leads into another and each small down leads into a small up. If you have access to doing a skills course I would highly recommend it. The smoother and faster you can corner will pay huge dividends on your Huka Challenge overall time.

Below is a training program which is aimed at helping those wishing to break the five and a half hour mark for the 85k. The program is designed for those that already have some riding experience and these riders should be able to comfortably do a two hour ride.

Days of the week are not set in stone so long as you organise your week into HIE, LIE, HIE, LIE once you start week 7.

This is so you are fresh for your HIE rides.

Training Intensities Explained

LIE- Low Intensity Endurance

HIE- High Intensity Endurance

The Link between breathing and exertion.

LIE- Pedalling takes some effort but is by no means strained. Your breathing frequency and depth is deeper than watching telly but not what you would call heavy. After a while you will notice your breath pattern has become rhythmical and you are pulling from the bottom of your lungs. Conversation is relatively easy but you will notice having to pull a breath every now and then.

HIE- This is where conversation stops. Pedalling is now difficult, although nowhere near your maximum. Breathing is now deep and powerful. You can feel your ribs making a strong effort and a lot of riders invent a rhythm to make the

all important exhale even stronger. To maintain this effort takes focus, not to mention some pain. While performing these efforts be conscious of trying to maintain the same effort throughout. This takes a bit of practise but is very rewarding to your overall fitness.

The program is 18 weeks long, starting at the beginning of August. All figures are in hours for the total workout including warm-up and cool-down. The first six 6 are to be done at LIE. This is a preparatory stage to give the body some endurance and prepare it for some harder sessions later.

Training week consists of three days a week for the first 6 weeks then upping to 4 days in week 7. Riding days are Tues, Thurs, Sat, Sun. If these days don't work for your schedule feel free to change the day but don't change the workout order for the week.

Weeks 7-11. Some HIE sessions will be introduced (see explanation for HIE effort).

Eg 5/10. This would be 5min at HIE effort and 10min recovery.

Example of a 1hr HIE session

15min warm up

5 min HIE

10 min Rec

5 min HIE

10 min Rec

5 min HIE

10 min cool down

Total 1hr

LIE sessions gradually increase over this period.

Week 12 is a recovery week to recharge.

Weeks 13-16 are similar to 7-11. The HIE efforts are a little longer with a bit less recovery between efforts. LIE sessions will reach their maximum during these weeks.

Note: If you miss a day, do not try to make it up. Just put it down to a recovery day. On your LIE rides if you feel like riding for a little longer, feel free to do so, but don't go overboard.

Week 27th July 1.5 LIE, 1.5 LIE, 2.5 LIE

Week 3rd August 1.5 LIE, 1.5 LIE, 2.5 LIE

Week 10th August 2.0 LIE, 1.5 LIE, 2.5 LIE

Week 17th August 2.0 LIE, 1.75 LIE, 3.0 LIE

Week 24th August 2.0 LIE, 2.0 LIE, 3.5 LIE

Week 31st August, Recovery Week, 1.0 LIE, 1.0 LIE, 1.5 LIE

Week 7th September 1.0 HIE 5/10, 1.5 LIE, 1.5 HIE 10/15, 4.0 LIE

Week 14th September 1.25 HIE 10/15, 1.75 LIE, 1.75 HIE 15/15, 4.25 LIE

Week 21nd September 1.5 HIE 10/15, 2.0 LIE, 2.0 HIE 15/15, 4.5 LIE

Week 28th September 1.5 HIE 10/15, 2.0 LIE, 2.25 HIE 20/15, 4.75 LIE
Week 7th October 1.5 HIE 10/10, 2.0 LIE, 2.5 HIE 20/10, 5.0 LIE
Week 12th October, Recovery Week, 1.0 LIE, 1.0 HIE 10/10, 2.0 LIE
Week 19th October 1.0 HIE 10/5, 1.5 LIE, 1.75 HIE 20/15, 4.5 LIE
Week 26th October 1.25 HIE 10/5, 1.75 LIE, 2.0 HIE 20/15, 5.0 LIE
Week 2nd November 1.75 HIE 15/15, 2.0 LIE, 2.25 HIE 20/15, 5.5 LIE
Week 9th November 2.0 HIE 15/15, 2.5 LIE, 2.25 HIE 20/15, 6.0 LIE
Week 16th November, Recovery Week, 1.5 LIE, 1.5 HIE 25/15, 2.5 LIE
Week 23rd November 1.0 HIE 10/10, 1.5 LIE, Day off, 1.0 Easy spin with 2x5min
HIE, Huka Challenge, Day off- you have earned it.

Once the course is finalised for this year's event I will be riding the course and doing some pace notes for various spots on the course to monitor your progress.

Happy riding, and be safe- know your limits.

Looking forward to seeing you on the start line 28th of November.

Carwyn May