

TEAM CP: THE PIONEER PERIODISATION

August	September	October	November	December	January	February
Phase 1 Mountain Biking Foundation Phase	Phase 2 The Pioneer General Preparation			Phase 3 The Pioneer Specific Preparation	Phase 4 The Pioneer Race Preparation & Race	Phase 5 Your off- season

What do the phases mean?

Phase 1 – Mountain Biking
Foundation Phase

There are two key objectives to this phase

- 1. Preparing your body to train** – If you build a good foundation now you are more likely to avoid injury throughout your race preparation, as well during the event itself. Which joints are tight and which are weak? Which muscles are strong and which are weak? For example, if you have a desk job and sit down for a significant portion of your day you will probably have tight hips and weak butt muscles. This could lead to niggles and injuries as you increase the training load, and could affect your ability to be strong on the bike. Book in with a good physio or PT and get a muscle balance/movement analysis done, and invest some time in stretching and strengthening your body. When it is time to ramp the training up your body will be better equipped to cope.
- 2. Develop your skills to be able to complete the race** – The Pioneer is a true adventure on the mountain bike, and you will be tackling a variety of terrain. Almost 20% of the course is on single track, and around 50% is on farm tracks. With 15,000m of climbing (and all the downhill that goes with it!), steep ascents and descents are a certainty. The general preparation phase is a great time to practice and develop specific mountain bike skills, so that you can feel confident about the variety of terrain you will encounter during the race. You might also benefit from a bunch ride or two. While the field is likely to spread out during the course of the Pioneer, there will be mass starts as well as sections where you and your teammate find yourself riding amongst a group. You will feel much more comfortable and confident, and be safer, if you have some bunch riding experience.

Phase 2 – The Pioneer General Preparation

1. **Slowly increase the duration of your training and keep it steady** – there is still plenty of time until race day so you don't want to be peaking yet, but it is definitely time to start logging some kilometres. This phase is about getting fitter and stronger, building your endurance, and continuing to develop your technique and skills. Now that the days are getting longer (in the southern hemisphere) you could start riding your bike to and from work a couple of days per week. This is an easy way to fit extra training into your day. You could also plan some weekend adventures or mini cycle tours on your bike – this is a really fun way to get more training in the legs as well as exploring new areas.
2. **Do one speed session a week** – the best way to do this is to get involved in a group session where you can challenge yourself and be pushed by others. A good coach or instructor will also focus on technique aspects of your performance in each session. Just one per week you mind you – don't attempt to do every training session at 100% effort. The bulk of your training should be in your aerobic training zone. As a rough guide, when you are training the aerobic zone you should still be able to happily maintain a conversation with your training buddies.
3. **Keep the balance** - Preparing for any endurance event is like doing a jigsaw puzzle as you juggle your mountain biking along with work and family commitments. Make sure that you keep everything that you need to do in perspective and have fun getting out to do some adventures. Getting your family or your partner involved will help keep that balance – just make sure that you keep it fun for them and thank them for their support!

Phase 3 – The Pioneer Specific Preparation

1. **Aim to build up to the duration you will be on course** – don't panic, this doesn't mean riding all day, every day, for seven days in a row! But it does mean doing the odd day that is similar in length to a typical stage of The Pioneer. It would also be good to schedule a couple of back to back efforts, where you do two long days in a row. This will help not just physically but also mentally, as you can be confident that come race week you will be able to handle some long days in the saddle. Just make sure that you allow plenty of rest in-between and after these long training days – in this phase, recovery is one of the most important parts of your training!

Aim to do these long sessions with your teammate, if possible, as you will learn about each other strengths and weaknesses and how you might best support one another over the course of the race.

2. **Specific strength focus** – bearing in mind the 15,000m of climbing ahead of you, this means really focusing on your hill strength. Practice climbing hills in a gear one or two higher than normal, while remaining in the saddle, for up to 10 minutes at a time. Also make sure you are still maintaining the flexibility and strength work that you did in phase 1, to remain balanced and help prevent injury.
3. **Simulate** - Time to get specific by simulating the course as best as possible in your local area.
4. **Sort your nutrition** – Keeping yourself hydrated and fuelled will be incredibly important during The Pioneer. In fact, it could make or break your race. It doesn't matter how fit and strong you are; if you don't give your body the right fuel, it won't keep going for seven days! Now is a good time to work out how much you might need to eat and drink, not only while you are riding but also before and after each stage. Practice your nutrition strategy on your long training days, and be sure to make notes of what worked for you and what didn't. This will be really valuable information to refer to when you are planning your race.
5. **Do some practice races** – These are a great way of testing your race systems including your gear, nutrition, pacing strategies, dealing with pre-race nerves and the intensity of a race.
6. **Life Balance - keep it real** – Whatever your mountain biking background, there is a certain amount of preparation time that you need put into The Pioneer. No matter how much you do, chances are you will worry that it isn't enough and feel that you need to do more. That's the nature of endurance events. Keep in mind that it is a matter of quality over quantity. Even the pros probably don't do as many training hours as you think – but they do make each and every one count. A well organised training plan can mean that you prepare well, achieve your goals and remain married at the end of it (with the option of doing it again...). Can you enjoy a glass of wine while training for this? Of course you can. It's about balance. Keep it real, and make sure that you make time for yourself and others to chill out and relax.

Phase 4 – Specific Preparation and Race

1. **Get ready for the intensity and excitement** – Completing practice events is a great way to prepare your mind and body for the intensity and excitement of race day. The first day of The Pioneer shouldn't be the first time that you stand on a start line. Club mountain bike races are great way to get used to those start line nerves, and provide an opportunity to practice your nutrition and test your gear. Of course, you won't be going as hard over the seven stages of The Pioneer as you will over a local 20km mountain bike course, but shorter races are still great for conditioning. As well as this, you might get a chance to have to deal with things such as punctures, mechanical issues, or even cramp, while under pressure. A practice race that doesn't go to plan is a valuable learning experience, helping you to get things right for your key race.

2. **Planning** – based on your experiences of previous races, as well as your long training sessions, get together with your team mate and write down a race plan. This should include a timeline of what you should do from when you get out of bed to standing on the start line, time checks for each stage of the course, your nutrition plan, and goals for each section. If you write it down it gives you time to think through it and also helps relax the nerves during the race. It also means you will need to do less thinking during your down-time over the course of the race, which means more time to rest and recover!
3. **Taper – less is more** – in the last couple of weeks you are not going to get any fitter so focus on sharpening up and feeling great. It is better to feel under done rather than over cooked in the last week prior to the race.
4. **Race** – you have prepared well - now it is time to race to your plan and have a blast!!

Phase 5 - Your off-season

1. **Rest/Recovery/Relax** – Chill out, relax and enjoy basking in your glory as a result of nailing The Pioneer! Enjoy doing things that you haven't done for a while.
2. **What is your next focus?** – One of the key issues as a result of completing something as big as The Pioneer is the almost depressive state that you can get yourself into following the event if you don't look after yourself. The Pioneer is such a big commitment to take on and requires a lot of energy and time to build up to, so when it is over and you go back to your day job you need something to fill the void. We recommend that you have your next focus set up prior to the event, whether it is a work project, study, a family focus or a holiday so you have it to look forward to before you build up to the next edition of The Pioneer!