

Benefits of Speedskating for Cyclists

- 1) The general concept of Cross-Training is beneficial to cyclists
 - Research has shown that cyclists can benefit from cross-training.
- 2) Complementary training seasons
 - The off-season for cycling is the in-season for skating, and vice-versa.
- 3) Complementary muscle groups and position
 - Quads, back, arms, and neck are used similarly in both activities.
- 4) Greater development of Core Muscle groups
 - A study conducted at the Human Performance Laboratory at St. Cloud State University in Minnesota found that skating develops muscles in the entire upper leg, rear end and hip, as well as the lower back. Muscles in the upper arms and shoulders are also developed when arms are swung vigorously while skating.
 - Skating strides work leg muscles for longer time intervals and through a greater range of motion than pedal strokes, restrained by cranks.
- 5) Aerobic benefits
 - Skating was found to be a better aerobic workout than cycling. Most cyclists coast up to 30% of the time they are riding.
- 6) Anaerobic benefits
 - Anaerobically, skating was found to be more beneficial than both running and cycling, because it is intrinsically easier and more natural for building hip and thigh muscles that are not developed in the other two forms of exercise. Unlike cycling, skating develops hamstring muscles, and unlike running, there is no pounding of the joints in your legs.
- 7) Complementary group skills
 - Skating in a group is similar to cycling
- 8) Complementary racing strategies
 - Drafting, pacing, and sprinting strategies are all similar to cycling.
- 9) Join other cyclists that have benefitted from doing both Cycling and Speedskating
 - Eric Heiden, Connie Carpenter Phinney, Sheila Young, Jim Ochowicz, Ben & Les Barcewski, Tom Shuler, Colton Barrett, John Coyle, and Guy East, to name a few!
- 9) How does a cyclist get started in speedskating?
 - Visit <http://www.IndySpeed.org> to get all the details.

Once you experience the sensation of flying around the ice, you'll be hooked!

Oregon Cycling Magazine:

[Speedskating is great for off-season training](#)

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<http://www.oregoncycling.org/2007/03/speedskating-is-great-for-off-season-training/>

by Linda Jellison

In the Northwest, many cyclists ride all year, regardless of the weather. Oregon has a large and diverse cycling community, ranging from the serious competitive racer to the recreational rider. Many cyclists cross train in the off-season with various activities to supplement their fitness levels and performance for bike racing.

During the hiatus from racing, competitive cyclists maintain their aerobic fitness by running, swimming, or other aerobically challenging activities. Speedskating is a sport that not only complements training on the bike, but challenges the cyclist in many ways as well.

Now a popular Olympic sport, it provides a great aerobic endurance workout and builds core and leg strength as well. Bruce Guthrie, President and coach of the Whatcom Speedskating club in Bellingham, Washington, notes that "cyclists will benefit from increased leg strength, balance and race tactics... cycling and speed skating use the same major muscle groups. Indeed, almost all speed skaters are cyclists in the off season."

Joseph Boquiren, a competitive Portland speedskater and River City/Team Oregon cyclist, explains how speedskating benefits his cycling in terms of endurance, core and leg strength, and body position. Joseph, who already had a strong background in speedskating when he branched off into bike racing several years ago, says that speedskating lets the cyclist combine weight training and aerobic activity. "Accelerating during turns requires tremendous amounts of leg and core strength," he says. "The low tuck position required to deliver maximum power to the ice requires higher than average flexibility and strength in the joints, especially the pelvis, ankle and knee, all of which deliver dividends while on the bicycle." As for endurance training, Boquiren explains that a speedskater "needs to deliver maximum power to the ice for as long as possible in order to do well in races. The payoff for cycling means more ability to pull at the front of the pack, longer jams on the hills, and faster splits in time trials."

I asked Nick Thometz, three-time Olympic long track speedskater and coach of the 1994 Olympic speedskating team, about his experience coaching speedskaters, specifically regarding cross training on the bike. It turns out he used cycling more than running because cycling uses the same basic muscle groups and because it is a low-impact activity. "We did all types of conditioning on the bike: sub-aerobic, aerobic, anaerobic threshold and anaerobic," he said. Spinning/warming-down on stationary bicycles following ice training and racing is critical to flush out the lactic acid which aids in a quicker recovery time." Thometz believes that this kind of cross training has its benefits beyond the speedskating track. "Many great speedskaters have been World and/or Olympic Champions on the bike: Connie Carpenter Phinney, Connie Paraskevin Young, Sheila Young Ochowicz, Beth Heiden and Eric Heiden," he observes.

I asked a few skater/cyclists how they would compare their racing strategy between skating on the short track and bike racing. According to Joseph Boquiren, "racing strategy in short track seems to

be very similar to omnium events in bike racing. The Eric Kautzky Memorial Track Race at Alpenrose and the High Desert Omnium in Bend come to mind. Omniums reward points to high finishers, people who show up for all the events. Short track heats use a similar points system to rank skater placements. Joseph also notes that his mental preparation is very similar between short track speedskating and bike racing. "I try to race with clear objectives in mind. I visualize how I would conduct myself during a race beforehand and rehearse how I would handle myself if certain conditions arise. Of course there are always a number of unforeseen circumstances that may arise and one just has to adapt and roll with it", he says.

Alaska resident, speedskater and former pro cyclist Mike Schuler skates during the winter on a frozen lake. He began skating a few years ago, and got his first pair of Bont speedskates in December 2005.

Mike compares short track racing to a criterium, noting among the obvious differences that there are many more participants in a criterium compared to at most six skaters in a short track heat. The distances in short track racing on a 111-meter track, are usually 333, 500, 777, and 1000 meters.

Howard Unkeles, a long-time inline racer who has skated with the Mountain View Speedskating Club since 2003, finds close similarities in body position while on the bike and on skates. He emphasizes that strengthening and using the core abdominal muscles help skaters and cyclists alike to maintain correct body position while avoiding back pain and injury. "I always practice curving my lower back up and in, which curls my upper back downward so that my elbows are bent and my arms and shoulders are relaxed," he says.

"All the support comes from the center—the abdominal wall—both in biking and in skating. Being able to practice that on the bike really helps me skate." He also cites constant leg movement, cardio and endurance as the primary advantages of both sports, which benefit an athlete's fitness level in either sport, but notes that "only if you have a sufficient level of technique on the skates will the reverse work. That is, you have to be able to maintain your position and technique in a sprint or over long distances on the skates in order to get your heart rate and breathing elevated enough to think that you are getting a good enough workout to carry over to the bike."

Howard also points out the challenges involved in convincing cyclists to try cross training on ice during the off-season. He cites the main reasons preventing cyclists from seriously pursuing skating: money, time, and technical challenges. Mastering the techniques such as performing crossovers, skating on edges, weight transfer, and balance, which are necessary to become adept at racing, takes patience, good coaching, and a lot of ice time. Then there is the cost of equipment. Though much cheaper than investing in a decent road bike, skating boots and blades start at around \$150.

The limited availability of coached ice practice time, compared with the open roads and the opportunity to ride any time a cyclist desires, makes the bike far more accessible and therefore more appealing to most cyclists. However, the technical challenge of speedskating and the rewards for persistence do pay off. As Joseph Boquiren puts it, "Stick-to-itiveness pays off in the end because racing year round gets one fitter faster than the traditional method of taking the winter off."

How does a cyclist get started in speedskating? Visit <http://www.IndySpeed.org> to get all the details. Once you experience the sensation of flying around the track on ice, you'll be hooked!