

Find A Fox Newsletter April 12, 2009—How far did I go?

Are you getting outside and enjoying the warmer weather? Running and biking outside is so much more enjoyable than toiling indoors on a stationary bike or treadmill, but there's no little dial to tell you how far you went! It's perfectly fine to plan your training based on time rather than distance, but if you want to know how far you went, there are many options.

First, there are a number of online resources that allow you to map your route and measure your distance. (So much easier than the old paper map and string routine!) Some of these resources allow you to save your route, either publicly in a shared database or privately (so only you can access it—a good idea if your route starts from your home). A few of my favorites are:

- USA Track and Field: <http://www.usatf.org/routes/map/>
- Beginner Triathlete: <http://www.beginnertriathlete.com/discussion/training/map-routemgr.asp>
 - I really like this one because I can save routes privately, but the site requires registration (free) to use the mapper. If you sign up, search the routes for “Sherwood” to find the TriFox Tuesday Ride mapped out!
- Map my tri: <http://www.mapmytri.com/>

There are also tools that will allow you to measure your distance and speed as you go. For your bike rides, a simple cyclometer (also called a bike computer) can be purchased quite inexpensively (although more costly models with more features are available). A small monitor attached to your fork counts the revolutions of the wheel to measure distance and speed.

For your runs, a basic pedometer which counts your strides is available, but these are notoriously inaccurate because they require you to know your stride length, which will change based on terrain, your speed, and even weather. A more accurate option is a foot pod which uses an accelerometer. Polar makes several heart rate monitors which include this feature, and Nike has come out with a foot pod that “talks” to your iPod. The Polar system is my choice for measuring distance because it allows me to run on the indoor track at the Y during the winter without having to count laps.

GPS is also useful for measuring distance. A number of companies have come out with GPS devices specifically for athletes. Garmin is probably the best known, but there are also systems from Timex, Polar, and others. The advantage to these systems is they work for biking, running, walking, rollerblading, and any other activity you can think of. I do suggest doing your research and choosing an established brand. A friend had a bad experience with an inexpensive GPS—it would routinely lose track of him for large chunks of time, even though he was out in the open without trees or buildings to block the satellite signal.

When all else fails, get in your car and drive the route!! Just don't take that shortcut across your neighbor's lawn...

Now that it's getting warmer out, please be aware of your safety. Always, always, always wear that helmet on the bike, be smart, and be visible. www.bicyclesafe.com outlines common cycling accidents and explains how to avoid them. Key tips include: never pass a car on the right, take up more of your lane to be visible when appropriate, and use the road, not the sidewalk.

Finally, I'd be remiss if I didn't remind you that the sun is getting more intense as spring rolls around. Use sunscreen to protect yourself, and don't forget that spot on your low back that tends to get exposed when you're on your bike. A common complaint is that sunscreen tends to run into the eyes when you sweat. I've found that non-lotion sunscreens have a lower propensity to do this. Try some of the alcohol based sprays like Coppertone Sport, a gel like Bullfrog, or my personal favorite, the Kinesys spray. (Kinesys is hard to find; sometimes the local bike and running shops carry it, or you can buy it online at www.kinesys.com.)

Lean the Lingo

This edition will be devoted bike parts. When I first started biking, I found bikes terribly intimidating!

- Tires: There are two kinds of bike wheels. The typical type are called "clinchers." These consist of a tube that holds the air and a tough rubber tire on the outside. Some people have specialized race wheels called "tubeless tires." With these wheels, the tire is a single unit. People like them because they can change a flat more quickly in a race situation, but they do require more maintenance.

- Valves: There are two kinds of valves on tires. The

Schrader style is used on cars and lower pressure bike tires. Presta valves may be unfamiliar. These valves are thinner and have a small nut you must loosen before you can pump air into the tire.

- Fork: The part on your bike that goes down around the front wheel.
- Bottom bracket: the part on your bike where the pedals connect
- Down tube: The tube on your bike that goes from the handlebar area down to the bottom bracket
- Seat tube: This tube runs from the seat to the bottom bracket
- Top tube: This tube runs from the handlebar area to the seat tube. On most bikes, this tube is horizontal or approximately horizontal. You may remember from being a kid that “boys’ bikes” have horizontal tubes, and on “girls’ bikes”, the top tube slopes downward, parallel to the down tube. However, since women don’t tend to train and race in full skirts, most women’s specific bikes have horizontal top tubes, so, despite my neighbor’s question, no, I did not buy a “boy’s bike!” What makes a bike “women’s specific” is the geometry—the relationship of the lengths of the top, down, and seat tubes.

Fox and Kit Chat

Kits should take the lead—you might want to ask your Fox:

- How do you dress for outdoor exercise during this springtime weather, where it’s not quite warm and not quite cold?
- How do you track workouts?
- How do you handle sun protection?
- Any other questions that have come up during training