

Breakaway Bikes

RPM Indoor Cycling Program

by Joanna K. Chodorowska



What is the RPM Program? RPM stands for 'revolutions per minute'. The RPM class is an indoor cycling class for the serious cyclist to the multi-sport athlete. Participants range in age from their early twenties to late sixties and are beginners to the advanced athlete. One of the requirements for the program is that you have your own road or triathlon bike. You bring the bike and it is set up on a Compu-Trainer® stand - this allows your bike to be a stationary bike and adds resistance to the rear wheel to simulate hills, etc. The beauty of this particular program is that you get a big screen to watch which shows you the profile of the workout you are about to do and you also see how you are riding compared to the riders next to you. There is enough space for twelve bikes - six bikers to each screen. Everyone has the same 'ride', however some are stronger than others. It definitely becomes a small competition to see if you can beat the person ahead of you while still staying within the parameters of your designated LT (lactate threshold), heart rate and watts produced per pedal strokes.

This is definitely not like a typical indoor cycling class you would find in a gym. First of all, you are using your own bike. Secondly, there is no flywheel to help with the rotation of the pedals. You have to do all the work yourself. Finally, what indoor bike measures your watts output while in a class?

The RPM Program is twelve weeks long including testing, with either two 1-hour sessions during the week, or one, two-hour weekend session per week or pay as you go. They have both early morning sessions during the workweek at 6:30 AM, evenings at 5:30 PM and 7 PM. The weekend sessions are two hours long at either 8:00 or 10:30 AM. More information about times and fees can be found on their website at www.breakawaybikes.com.

I attended what was the start up session for the twelve-week program. The first day was testing which included blood pressure, weight, body fat percent and a six mile time trial over a Compu-Trainer® set course

with hills (all I had to do was pedal and change gears accordingly). Your heart rate is monitored by a certified cycling coach and you get a printout with your current values. The training sessions are based on your LT levels, watts and heart rate. After six weeks, you measure it again to see how you improved. Your numbers will likely have changed and the next segment of the program reflects this as it becomes more challenging for the final six weeks.

After the testing, I received a laminated card along with the page print out with all my numbers. The numbers include a list of your HR, watts, and LT at various levels. The higher the LT the less time you are expected to be able to go at that particular pace. The highest level or 5c was what you could do all out for about five seconds. Unfortunately, most of us won't be training at that level any time soon.

After a small break, Joe Wentzell, the Breakaway's Head Coach and mastermind behind the program, did the transcribing of numbers and printouts, while we did a ten-minute warm-up. The main set was five repeats of two minutes at LT/5a (the level you should be able to maintain for thirty minutes) with corresponding watts and one-minute recovery. It was amazing how forty minutes just whizzed by!

The class was actually pretty cool. I met and a few cyclists and a lot of triathletes from Quaker City Wheelmen (the Breakaway sponsored tri team) and some triathletes from T3 Triathlon (the Breakaway sponsored triathlon club), one of which was an elite triathlete in the women's field. She out rode all but two of the men in that class! Heather has been doing the classes during the week for three years now to keep her motivated during the winter season. Heather guarantees that because of her training at Breakaway, she will be stronger once she does get outdoors again in the spring. Her first big race is in April, so she wants to be ready way before the warmer weather hits. Others had different reasons but all admit that there is nothing better than riding indoors with the guidance of Breakaway and the RPM Program to make them stronger and better cyclists. The mini competitions don't hurt either!

Breakaway Bikes, 1923 Chestnut St, Philadelphia, PA 19103 - www.breakawaybikes.com

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Joanna K Chodorowska, BA, NC is a nutritionist, swim coach and competitive triathlete. She owns her own company Nutrition in Motion in North Wales specializing in creating personalized nutrition programs for athletes, triathletes and want-to-be athletes. She works with real foods and incorporating healthier foods into one's daily routine as a means to gain better health, strength and fitness. Teaching clients the why behind better food choices and how to make them is the basis of her programs. Better health thru better nutrition education...one meal at a time. Joanna is also a private swim coach providing lessons for new swimmers and triathletes.