

INJURY OF THE MONTH: PREVENT INJURY BY CROSS-TRAINING!

It's mid-summer; I'm going to RAGBRAI tomorrow, and I don't want to write about injuries. Instead, I'd like to share a case history with you about how a runner tried cross-training after suffering her third stress fracture in 5 years. To simplify the research, the runner is me. No, I haven't suffered from ALL the injuries I've written about in this column- most of them, but not all.

Last fall, after I ran the Portland Marathon and was diagnosed with my third stress fracture, I figured it was time to acknowledge that I was doing something wrong. Actually I knew what I did wrong each of the three times, but, suffering from the superwoman/I-feel-great complex, I thought I could get away with it. "It" was racing on Saturday and running long on Sunday, or running long on Saturday and longer on Sunday, or anything involving "Oh, that sounds like fun, sure I'll do that" when I would have been better off taking a rest day.

So, I realized that I couldn't be trusted. If I was going to cross-train successfully, I had to be pushed (shoved, really) in that direction. The push came in late winter when Tim Sheehan, a Fast Tracks member, emailed a group of friends asking if anyone wanted to join him on RAGBRAI, the Des Moines Register's Annual Great Bicycle Ride Across Iowa. "Sure, I'll go", I emailed him. Now if my Saturday running buddy asked me if I wanted to run Sunday at the Wissahickon, I would have to say, "No, I have to ride my bike."

Now, the RAGBRAI isn't a little ride. It's 450 miles over 7 days, and they tell me that Iowa isn't flat. I committed to the ride at the end of March, figured I'd buy a bike and do a long ride each weekend until the event in mid-July. Then the rains came. And buying a bike was more complicated than I thought. "Make sure to buy one that's comfortable" I was warned. Did you ever ride a road bike? If you haven't, let me assure you that none of them are comfortable! By mid-May I finally understood "comfort" and found a great bike. I was then invited to go to the "Mayor's Midnight Sun Marathon" on June 21 in Anchorage Alaska. "Oh, that sounds like fun, sure I'll do that." I registered for the half marathon for which I was totally untrained. The biking was only slightly sidelined as I put in some running miles.

Alaska was wonderful!! When I got home, it became easy to say no to fun running dates when I realized I had only a few weeks left to get in some biking miles. I still was having trouble getting my feet out of the pedal clips, and I was going to ride with 10,000 cyclists across some mid-western state! A running/cycling friend taught me the ropes. I searched out bike clubs and rode. I became neurotically desperate. On the Fourth of July weekend, I forego a running race for the first time, maybe ever, and I cycled. That 3-day weekend I rode 150 miles, and I felt great! Maybe I can do this!

I leave tomorrow. I'll let you know!

Stay on the roads, one way or another.

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My training as a therapeutic massage therapist includes ongoing study in anatomy and physiology, pathology and clinical practice.

Please send me feedback on this series. Do you want more info than I offered? Do you want more case history? Less? Do you have an injury you're curious about? Let me know at BobbiVT2PA@aol.com