



What is a sports test?

IF YOU WANT TO get the most from your training and perform to the best of your ability, sports testing is for you. No longer only for the elite, anyone who wants results and evidence of their improvement should consider investing some time and money in getting tested

WITH limited time to train it is important that you make your training effective. Testing can indicate your strength and weaknesses in relation to your discipline and provide baseline data for setting goals and training programmes. It can also provide feedback on the effectiveness of a training cycle in improving your performance on the bike.

Testing ensures that you are targeting your real, not

perceived weaknesses, and testing at the end of each training cycle can check that training has been effective. It allows you to determine if your training goals have been met and to create new goals and keep you focused. Regular testing is great for motivation — whether it shows you are on track or the opposite.

Tests target a handful of factors that directly affect your performance.

These may vary depending on the length and type of event you want to take part in, so it is important that the person conducting your tests has a clear idea of what you want to achieve. The tests that most cyclists use are based on one, or all of the following: measuring power, oxygen uptake, lactate threshold and heart rate, to see how these variables change as intensity of exercise increases. There are several

variables affecting whether the outcome of your test is accurate and meaningful, but most important are the knowledge and qualifications of the person performing the test.

If you are going to have a sports test it is important that you can rely on the validity of the test as you will be basing all your future training on the results. In this, as in every walk of life, there are cowboys who are willing to take your money and not deliver the high standard of goods that you are expecting. The most reputable qualification you can expect from someone performing a sports test is that they are British Association of Sports and Exercise Scientists accredited. This means that they have undergone a series of assessments and qualification to meet the high standards of BASES.

SOLID BASES

Anyone can become a member of BASES from graduate level upwards, but full accreditation takes several years of post-graduate commitment. BASES is supported by UK Sport for sporting excellence. See the website www.bases.org.uk for a consultant in your area. Not everyone BASES accredited will be working commercially; many are in research. And there won't always be a BASES-accredited centre in your immediate area, so be prepared to travel.

With the improvement and availability of power-measuring devices, heart rate monitors, advanced turbos and downloadable data, pretty much anyone can conduct a basic test. However, the quality of the data and, more importantly, the interpretation depend on the knowledge and experience of the person conducting the test.

▶ NEXT WEEK:
Back to basics with new bikes

