

# 2011 Winner Ben Thomas Shares His Top Racing Tips



Hopefully by now with little over a month to go you've started training for this year's Kielder 100, if not there's still plenty of time, don't worry! Over the first half of the season I've completed a real mix of races including the Cape Epic 8 day stage race, the National XC MTB Series, and single day marathons such as the European Champs. It's been difficult juggling the training and I've had to compromise performances at certain races which I never like doing.

My plan for the summer has changed thanks to an unfortunate rescheduling of the final National XC Series and bad luck at the National XC Champs. Normally this time of year is spent enjoying plenty of long steady miles chasing George Budd and Calum Chamberlain around dusty trails. These rides can often extend into 7 hour epics and the stories that come from these days are what makes cycling so fun. These long rides at the weekends build endurance but a little speed is also necessary to be competitive at any endurance event so during the summer I'll still do some intervals or tempo rides during the week.

There's plenty of inspiration right now coming from the Olympic Park and as I look out the window the sun is shining and the trails are baking dry. Hopefully this is enough to get you on your bike building up your endurance. If you can manage 4 or 5 hour mountain bike rides then the chances are you'll survive the 8 or 9 hours of racing in September. Build up over the next month so that 4 hours offroad isn't an issue. Then during the week I'd suggest a zone 3 tempo ride, if you don't have a heart rate monitor then the intensity of this ride should be done where you can still talk but the sentences are short. Start with half an hour at zone 3 and add 15 minutes each week. You could also try doing some more intense workouts but I'd suggest skills training would be a better use of the time; the trails in Kielder Forest aren't too technical but they are very rough and this makes it difficult to ride smoothly if you're not used to riding trail centre type terrain.



One of the most important things to know is that recovery is a huge part of any training regime - this doesn't mean sitting on the sofa and eating tons of cake - but rest is certainly best in the week before the event. R&R should form a big part of your taper week leading into the Kielder 100, this time will give your muscles the opportunity to recovery from all the hard training you've put in and will allow your body time to prepare for the effort its about to endure.



Nutrition is crucial during the event; fortunately there are plenty of feed zones around the course to refuel on food and liquids. It's worth avoiding drinking or eating anything new on race day if you can and instead setting out a feeding strategy planning what you'll eat every hour during the event. Bike setup is also key, any slight issues could develop into a race ending problem over 100 miles. I'll be riding my Santa Cruz Highball which is a 29" wheeled hardtail. Using parts from my sponsors I've been able to build a lightweight but robust bike which is perfect for marathon racing. The bigger wheels roll over bumpy rocky terrain such as that in Kielder Forest and save me energy which I can use later on in the event. A full suspension bike would add even more comfort but there aren't any huge descents in the race so the 29er hardtail is the perfect race bike.

There's plenty more tips I could give but this article would turn into an essay, plus I can't have my rivals knowing all my training secrets!

Good luck and see you on the start line.  
Ben Thomas, 2011 Open Male Winner

*Big thanks to Ben for writing this article and giving us an insight into his training and prep. (Article written August 2012)*



**ONE LAP.  
ONE RIDER.  
ONE ADVENTURE.  
ONE HUNDRED MILES.**