



# Solving the Cyclist Dilemma

## The Brilliance of Efficient Technique and the Alliance With Gravity

### **Introduction:**

Every endurance sport has its specific “dilemma” to solve if you want to perform at your highest potential. The dilemma is like a *riddle* to solve - a riddle that centers around your *efficiency*.

And in *every* sport that dilemma involves your relationship with gravity. In this eBook, you will learn about the specific gravitational challenge of cycling.

However, let’s start with a brief overview of efficiency in endurance sports and consider why gravity is so important.

### **Efficiency:**

Efficiency is the “Holy Grail” in every endurance sport: It is a Quest to go faster and farther with less energy, faster recovery and less risk of injury. It is a Quest for...

## **Effortless Power**

*Wait a minute!* How can power be *effortless*?

It's simple! Tap into forces you don't have to actually generate. Here's the secret... (That's really no secret): There is a force that is constantly available to each and every one of us, everywhere, all the time. You guessed it...

*Gravity!* To maximize your efficiency, your performance potential, strengthen your *Alliance With Gravity*.

## **The 90% Rule:**

*Ninety percent of your neural energy* (the electricity that unites your body and brain) is expended just *maintaining your balance* - your alliance with gravity. (That leaves just *ten percent* for texting and driving ) You have no control to divert that energy to anything else. Not even texting and driving !

Yet, I bet you're probably not even conscious of your balance most of the time.

## **Ignore it or Honor it?**

Most athletes choose the popular "mind over matter" approach to athletic performance: Use sheer mental will and the *desire for glory* to "force" your body to higher levels of exertion. All the while, striving to ignore any feedback from the body. At best, you have only 10% of the neural "body-brain" connection to work with in this mode of mind over matter. "*Come on body, go faster* "

## **Mind IN Matter**

Choose the "Mind **IN** Matter" approach, and you tap into that other 90% of your neural activity - skillfully channeling and directing your body's intelligence: tapping into your proprioceptive, visual and vestibular intelligence. These govern your *alliance with gravity*. Since you are already "hardwired" to maintain balance, why ignore it or resist it? Why not develop a foundation of "kinetic intelligence" for effortless power?



### **It's Personal:**

Given our uniqueness as individuals, the pursuit of “effortless power” for each of us is a personal one. There is no absolute “onesize-fits-all” technique in any sport that will work for every body.

However, the same universal laws of physics apply to every one of us in our personal alliance with gravity. The pursuit is personal, but the challenge is collective. When we can identify and define that collective challenge in each sport, we have a compass to guide our individual pursuit. And this brings us to...

### **The Cyclist's Dilemma:**

Move forward! That is, horizontal to Earth's surface. To do this most efficiently, transform the vertical pull of gravity by 90 degrees into horizontal motion. This transformation is an amazing process when we really pause to ponder it:

Our Earth *orbits* the Sun by transforming the pull of gravity by 90 degrees. In every instance, this transformation requires *dynamic balance*.

In cycling, you move forward (horizontally) by applying body weight (vertically) to the pedals. The drive-train of your bike takes care of the 90-degree transformation for you – it transfers your pedaling motion into forward progress. That makes cycling pretty easy, yes? Just push down on the pedals and leave the rest to the bike. What could be simpler?

### **Body Weight: Pedals vs. Saddle:**

But here's the “catch”: As you transfer your weight from one foot/pedal to the other foot/pedal, you also have to maintain a stable relationship with your bike so that you safely proceed in the direction you choose. You do this primarily through your *contact with the saddle*. By sitting on your bike's saddle, you apply some of your body weight to the pedals and leave some in the saddle. It would seem then that the more contact and weight you have in the saddle, the more stable you will be. However, at the same

time, the more weight you have in the saddle, the more uncomfortable the saddle is.

And the less weight you apply to the pedals, the slower you go.



### **Cyclist's Dilemma... in One Question:**

How can you maximize weight in the pedals for power, minimize weight in the saddle for comfort, and still remain balanced, stable and sustainably efficient?

### **No Ground to Stand On:**

And there's still one more element to this dilemma: As you are applying your body weight to the pedal platform, it is falling away from you. There are few, if any, other experiences in life where you apply your body weight to unstable platforms that fall away from your feet as you step on them.

And that's not all: The more weight you apply to those moving platforms the faster they fall away, and the less weight you have in the saddle for stability. While your hands on the bars provide some lateral stability, most of it comes from your saddle contact.

### **Party's Over:**

So the "quest" in cycling is this: Maximize your weight on two unstable platforms (pedals) that are in constant motion under your feet to move forward. At the same time, keep your pelvic core stable and relatively motionless – so you can navigate safely. Bicycling isn't so simple anymore, huh? Gee, hope I didn't ruin your party.

### **Getting to the Core:**

A key to resolving the Cyclist's Dilemma is *optimal pelvic core engagement and stabilization*. Consider this: To ride like a pro, your pelvic core must successfully perform *three tasks simultaneously*:

1) Maintain a stable body-to-bike relationship through your saddle.

- 2) Articulate the shift of weight from one moving pedal to the other.
- 3) Support your forward-leaning upper body.

### **Posture and Alignment:**

To successfully perform all three of these tasks simultaneously, you must maximize pelvic core muscle engagement and stability as you ride. This requires correct *posture and alignment*.

There is a simple way to do all of these things as you ride. It starts with your...

### **Almighty Standing Athletic Position**

Also known as the ASAP (think: “As Stable As Possible”), this posture assures optimal core engagement and stability in many, many sports - *including cycling*.

### **To Practice the “Almighty Standing Athletic Position” (ASAP):**

- Stand (off your bike) with your feet at hip width, parallel to one another.
- Bend your knees slightly.
- Hinge at your hips, keeping your low back flat.
- Lengthen your spine from head to “tail”.

[Click here or on the photograph below](#) (one of the 37 Instructional Videos in the [Zendurance Cycling Self Study Guide](#)), where I demonstrate ASAP.

Adapt this position as closely as possible on your bike (both through proper bike fit and technique practice), and you will produce more power, be more stable and more enduring. To do this:





**ASAP maximizes pelvic core muscle engagement and stability.**

- 1) Mount your bike on a stationary stand and make sure the front and rear wheels are level.
- 2) Practice the ASAP stance off your bike. Use a mirror (both front and side views) to check that you are incorporating all the points listed above.
- 3) Close your eyes and commit this position to your "feeling" memory.
- 4) Get on your bike and (closing your eyes) use that feeling memory to find the same position (or as similar as possible) on your bike . Do this standing - before you begin pedaling. Most importantly, make sure to hinge at your hips and keep your low back relatively flat.
- 5) Hold your focus on that posture as you begin to pedal - slowly at first.

**The specific benefits of good posture and alignment on your bike include:**

- Stability and control
- Safety

- Increased pedaling strength and efficiency
- Greater endurance
- More speed
- Easier respiration
- Greater enjoyment and comfort
- Fewer overuse injuries



The [Zendurance Cycling Self-Study Guide](#) provides detailed instruction through text, video and audio guides to help you perfect ASAP off your bike, and to adapt this position to your riding technique – both road and triathlon.

### **Getting Started**

Here are some highly effective first steps to improve you performance on your bike:

- 1) Make sure your bike is set-up to optimize your “As Stable As Possible” ASAP riding position
- 2) Learn to ride well in your ASAP riding position
- 3) Learn to maximize your weight in the pedals and minimize your weight in the saddle

I *highly recommend* that you begin your Quest for Effortless Power on a road bike - *even if your goal is triathlon*. A properly-fit road bike positions you optimally to ride in ASAP and will enable you to improve your efficiency and performance faster than starting on a triathlon (TT) bike. *Trust me!!*

Below, click on the picture of me standing next to my bike for another instructional video from the [Zendurance Cycling Self-Study Guide](#) that shows you how to evaluate your bike fit for the ideal ASAP riding position as the first key step to solving the Cyclist’s Dilemma. It also explains why a road bike provides a

better fit for ASAP.



### **Bike Fit for ASAP? “Got it ... What Next?”**

By riding in ASAP you are now improving your ability to *ride like a pro*.

Do you remember the *three tasks* your core must perform *simultaneously and continuously* if you want to ride like a pro? If not, go back and memorize all three.

Along with that “As Stable As Possible” pelvic core, to maximize your cycling *performance*, you need to:

- Maximize pedal weight
- Minimize saddle weight

*But how?* Zendurance Cycling has developed a very effective drill that will enable you to improve this ability. It’s called...

### **The Yin-Yang Drill**

Practice the Yin-Yang Drill with your bike mounted on a stationary stand.

Here is a basic description of the Yin-Yang Drill:

- Shift to your *hardest* gear
- Get into your best ASAP
- Pedal very *slowly* and focus on pelvic core stability
- Keep your hands light on the bars
- As you pedal, no movement between your body and your saddle (This is called “Saddle Silence”)
- Do this for one minute
- Now shift to your *easiest* gear
- Check your ASAP
- Spin the pedals very fast - *but...*
- As you pedal, no movement between your body and your saddle (Maintain “Saddle Silence” )
- Do this for one minute
- Repeat this sequence by shifting back to your hardest gear



### **Very Important**

When you practice Yin-Yang, *keep your Perceived Rate of Exertion low*. Why? This drill is not supposed to be an interval session. It is an *opportunity!* It provides your body’s neuromuscular system with a problem to solve, and it does this through a structure that supports problem solving.

The “Yang” part of the drill is the first part: High resistance (your hardest gear) and *slow motion* (low cadence).

The *opportunity* here:

- Learn to maximize weight in the pedals and minimize weight in the saddle
- Learn to *smoothly* shift your body weight from one moving platform to the other

- Learn to maintain saddle silence and pelvic core stability - with very little reliance on your saddle

The key to learning these skills in the beginning is to *practice slowly*. This is very similar to traditional martial arts: Study and learn the movements in slow motion, and then bring them up to speed. The slow motion enables you to explore every nuance, every detail.

On the other side, the “Yin” part of the drill is exactly the opposite: Very little resistance (your easiest gear) at the highest cadence you can sustain - *and still remain quiet in the saddle*.



*The opportunity here:*

- Learn to maintain pelvic core stability as you increase leg speed
- Learn to spin the pedals very fast by *relaxing* the muscles and connective tissues of your hips, legs, knees, ankles and feet
- Imprint the perfect circular path that each foot must take around the pedal stroke at very fast cadence - *but at a low level of effort*. *Relaxation* is key for a smooth and efficient stroke

### **It's Neuromuscular!**

The Yin-Yang Drill (and the entire Zendurance Drill Series) focus on training your *neuromuscular* system.

- Neuromuscular training is the key to mastering technique.
- Technique is the key to maximizing efficiency.
- Efficiency is the key to *effortless power*

### **Much, Much More!**

There are many more technique details you can focus on as you practice the Yin-Yang Drill. And there are many ways you can increase the degree of difficulty (challenge) to continue improving.

I have been faithfully practicing (and evolving) this drill for years, and I continue to increase my performance and efficiency on the bike using the Zendurance Cycling Drills and Methodology - as a USAT nationally ranked All-American triathlete, and for triathlons up to triple-iron distance.

The [Zendurance Cycling Self-Study Guide](#) has Text, Videos and Audio Guides that will enable you to get the most out of this drill. It is a most effective way to:

- Maximize pedal weight
- 
- Minimize saddle weight

These two skills - combined with your “As Stable As Possible” ASAP pelvic core - improve your cycling performance in all these areas:

- Efficiency
- Endurance and comfort
- Speed
- Power
- Stability and safety

### **Ready for More?**

The [Zendurance Cycling Self-Study Guide](#) guides you through an intensive investigation of posture, alignment, biomechanics and riding position strategies. For both road *and triathlon* bikes. You learn how to apply these skills to performance-based training. Ride like a pro!!

It includes

- 136-page PDF e-Book
- 37 instructional videos

- 28 audio guides

**Read reviews of the Self-Study Guide at [this link](#).**  
**What makes Zendurance Cycling unique? [Find out here](#).**

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time you alternate, so do it smoothly. Smooth, quick gear changes are vital for this exercise. If you are warming up for high-intensity intervals, perform Yin/Yang warm-ups in the riding position you will be using for those intervals. If you will be riding in more than one position, do these warm-ups at a similar proportion.

Yin/Yang is a crucial technique for training your neuromuscular system. For a more detailed introduction to Yin/Yang as a warm-up, see **Video 28-21: Yin/Yang Warm-ups**.

**Video 28: Yin/Yang Warm-up Introduction**

**Video 30: Yin/Yang Warm-up First Position**

**Jumps**

After Yin/Yang, do (4-6) 30-second jumps at a high cadence and high resistance. Perform your jumps at a cadence of 90 or higher, choosing a resistance that enables you to maintain the excellent biomechanics of a smooth pedal stroke. Your rate of perceived exertion (RPE) should be 7-8 on a scale of 1-10 (Zone 4-5). Recover by lowering resistance and spinning easy until your RPE drops back to 3-4 (Zone 2). Typically this takes 60-90 seconds, but allow more time if needed for this recovery. Perform these jumps in the rider position(s) you will use for your session. To finish the warm-up, spin again for 2-5 minutes.

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