

WEEK IN TRAINING

Marlen Reusser

The week: 11-17 July 2022

Location: Livigno, Italy

Training for: Tour de France Femmes

A latecomer to cycling who didn't compete in her first race until she was 25, Marlen Reusser has quickly made a name for herself in the women's peloton as one of the strongest time triallists. The 30-year-old Swiss rider defended her European TT title in August, and is also a three-time national champion against the clock, while she took silver in last year's Olympics.

A qualified medical doctor, Reusser is a woman of many talents – she won the gravel stage at July's Tour de France Femmes, has 14 UCI wins to her name and has twice triumphed at the Swiss road race championships. Here she tells us about her training before the TdFF.

What was this week's purpose?

I caught Covid after the Women's Tour [6-11 June] and it took me a while to feel good again, so I spent these two weeks in Livigno in the Italian Alps, and in the first week I just did endurance rides with little intensity. The second week I did intense efforts but it felt like the cruellest and harshest training of my life. I was so far away from my normal watts. My coach [Hendrik Werner, who is also Reusser's partner] did some lactate testing with me using a mobile measuring tool, and it was interesting to see how my body adapted throughout the two weeks and got better. One of my strengths is that I adapt very fast to training.

Do you have specific TT sessions?

It's very hard but if I want to do a fast TT, I do six-minute efforts at VO2max on my time trial bike. Everyone can do four minutes but six minutes stretches you further. It's about keeping the pressure on the pedals for a good duration of time.



Celebrating her Tour de France Femmes stage triumph



Is there anything you've removed from your training?

Yes, I no longer do strength and core training. I was really disciplined with this, but I always had trouble with lower back pain and I realised that during core exercises I was only activating my back a little bit. So I stopped doing core and strength exercises and now it's better.

Does having a medical background help?

For sure, it gives me an advantage, as I have a good feeling for my body. Also, I can read ingredients lists and work out how much of it is marketing, and figure out the proper nutrition. Those who don't understand science overthink things more, but I am very relaxed as I have studied these topics. Having the knowledge, I'm able to explain things.

MONDAY

VO2MAX INTERVALS



I'll remember this day for the rest of my life, as it was my first hard TT session in a long time. I rode 34km down to altitude, and then did efforts on my TT bike where we also measured my blood lactate for the first time in a while. It was five eight-minute VO2max threshold efforts, but it was a disaster. The first eight minutes I felt OK, but from the second one I couldn't hold the watts, and I kept getting worse every time. It was not a nice experience, but one week later we

PROFILE

Age: 30

Height: 5ft 11in

FTP: Not disclosed

Lives: Bern, Switzerland

Rides for: SD Worx

Best results:

2x European TT champion (2021, 2022)

1st – Stage 4, Tour de France Femmes (2022)

2nd – Olympic Games TT (2021)

📧 @marlenreusser



Reusser has had to retune her race-winning engine

repeated it and it went so much better, so it did train my body.

TUESDAY

EASY ENDURANCE RIDE

5h

Because of the hard time I had the day before, I was not looking forward to this ride. I was so tired, but in the end it was much more fun, helped by riding with [SD Worx team-mate] Chantal van den Broek-Blaak and later Zdeněk Štybar [Quick Step-Alpha Vinyl]. It was the last day of a three-day block and it was a basic endurance ride, a really easy Zone 2 day, covering 129km and 2,700m of elevation.

WEDNESDAY

REST DAY

0h

Today was a rest day, so my boyfriend and I went for a nice meal at a little mountain resort, with him running alongside me as I rode my mountain bike. If I feel my legs need a spin on a rest day, I'll go for a short ride, but rarely more than 90

minutes. For me it's super-easy to do nothing on rest days.

THURSDAY

OVER-UNDER INTERVALS

4h

I named this 'Second try of Monster Intervals' on TrainingPeaks. We tried it the week before but I failed and had to stop the session, something that rarely happens. We went down to sea level again and controlled my lactate. My pre-warm-up consisted of three six-second sprints, and three 30-second high-cadence sprints. The proper warm-up was 20/40 intervals, followed by a six-minute rest. I then did 13 times 30/15 intervals that were very hard, with a 10-minute rest afterwards. Over and under thresholds were next: four times four minutes 'over', one minute 'under', finishing with two six-minute intervals at V02max. After failing the week before, I was very emotional to have completed it this time.

FRIDAY

TT INTERVALS

4h
30min

More TT intervals on my road bike, including four eight-minute efforts. The first effort was at sweetspot intensity, the next two were at threshold, and the last one was divided into 30/90s with the 30 seconds being sprinting speed and the 90 seconds riding at tempo. I produced more watts on the third and fourth efforts with lower blood lactate, so it showed the form was coming before the Tour.

SATURDAY

LONG MOUNTAINOUS RIDE

6h
15min

This was a long, Zone 2 endurance ride including climbing the Stelvio with my coach and the paracyclist Matthias Schindler, who weren't as trained for long-distance riding as I am. I'm not someone who pushes the pace in training - in fact, I'm probably the slowest! I can get bored on endurance rides, but I know they're so important to be able to do longer stages and it gives us a bigger aerobic capacity. If I am bored, I listen to audiobooks, figure out problems in my head, and engage my mind.

SUNDAY

TRAVEL DAY

0h

We had a four-hour drive home back to Switzerland. I don't count travel days as rest days, as I can't move as often as I would like, but I try to change position in the car and walk when we stop for petrol.

WEEK'S WISDOM

A SCIENCE-LED APPROACH

It's fascinating to see how Reusser's medical background influences her training. Though she pushes herself very hard, even to failure, the Swiss doctor takes the emotion out of it and pays attention only to the numbers - including her blood lactate scores. By taking this approach, she is able to quell panic about one-off missed targets and focus on the longer term.

THE NUMBERS

24hr
total riding
2hr 40min
Z3+ effort

