



## **Meat Motor Publishes Blog Post Explaining Polarized Unknown Chaos Workouts To Instill Mental Toughness For Cycling**

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Meat Motor, a blog that explains sports science studies to help its readers become faster cyclists and endurance athletes, has published a blog post that explains mental toughness and how to train to increase it. The blog post says that PUC interval training sessions instill mental toughness that can prove beneficial in endurance sports like cycling.

The blog post starts with the assumption that the ability to mentally cope with changing situations is very important to the athlete's performance in the race. It gives examples of someone attempting to break from the rank in a road race or a mechanical failure in a triathlon. The ability to deal calmly with rapidly changing adverse circumstances is a sign of mental fortitude that will translate to better performance in the field.

The blog post quotes a study by Gucciardi, Hanton, Gordon, Mallett, and Temby (2015) that states that mental toughness is "a personal capacity to achieve consistently high levels of subjective (e.g., personal goals or strivings) or objective (e.g., sales, race time, GPA) performance despite everyday challenges and stressors as well as significant adversities. In another paper by Gucciardi (2009) suggests that rather than

treating mental toughness as an objective personality construct or a post hoc explanation of a given behavior, researchers should consider mental toughness as a process that involves person-situation interactions.

The blog post surmises from the conclusions of these two papers that if mental toughness relies on person-situation interactions, then it can be trained. Possessing mental toughness helps athletes cope better than their opponents with the many demands (competition, training, lifestyle) that sport places on a performer. It also makes them more consistent leading to a more successful career by remaining determined, focused, confident, and in control.

The blog post then creates a connection between the state of flow and mental toughness. The flow state of mind is one in which the athlete acts with minimal conscious intention or awareness and where he does not overthink the execution of the race plan or technique. When this flow is interrupted, the athlete has to possess the ability to quickly reframe a response to the unexpected. The blog post says that the athlete should also have the confidence to continue into the unknown.

The team at Meat Motor advocates for a type of workouts they have named Polarized Unknown Chaos (PUC) Intervals. While training for them, the athlete completes a session "blind", not knowing where they are in the current interval and what intervals lie ahead. They work with no roadmap or session schedule. This forces the athlete to stay in the moment and persevere through the mental blockages that scream to the body "let's quit?". The intervals are randomized so that the athlete cannot figure out any pattern. The athlete simply has to maintain a cadence throughout the entire session, trusting the coach or workout designer.

The skills and mental resilience that one acquires during the PUC interval sessions benefit real-world competition performance. When the body is fatigued, the athlete quits making good grit decisions. The brain continues to say "stop or slow down." In a PUC Interval session, the athlete cannot back off or keep something in reserve since they are on an ERG at a given cadence. They can and must endure the session while mentally pressing through any unknowns. This trains mental toughness and builds grit.

The blog post then summarizes the learnings into 3 main points. Firstly, most of the "quit" is mental. When the mind is "done," the person almost always has much more in the physiological tank. Second, mental toughness can be trained by placing oneself in challenging mental situations as it's a learned behavior and not just an innate ability. Lastly, when one trains for unexpected situations, they are able to apply the learned grit to gain confidence when the unknown or unpredictable occurs in a race. Since they have mentally handled that type of challenge before, they can do it again.

Meat Motor is run by Jordan Fowler, a cycling enthusiast with an interest in scientific studies about endurance

and sports performance.

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## **Meat Motor**

*Breaking down sports science studies to help you become a faster cyclist and endurance athlete.*

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