

Created By: Bryan M. Yates
Training Type: Threshold to VO2 Max Efforts
Working HR Zones: Zones 4–5
Total Class Time: 60 Min

Description

As daylight saving time returns, avid roadies in cities across North America gather in packs every Tuesday night for their local version of “World Championships.” These are often one-hour unofficial races ridden more or less at full gas.



Here in Pasadena, CA, we have our version of “Worlds.” On Tuesdays and Thursdays a 150+ rider peloton blasts 10 fast laps around the famed Rose Bowl. Football fans will recognize it instantly as the iconic home of the yearly Rose Bowl college game. If you followed the 2015 Amgen Tour of California, it was also host to a nail-biting, down-to-the-millimeters sprint finish.

Large, race-pace group rides are chaotic, exhilarating, leg-searing affairs. The “Rose Brawl,” as it’s affectionately called by locals, is no different. With average speeds of 26 mph to 28 mph and sprints exceeding 38 mph, this group ride is as demanding as it is fast! And, where you choose to ride it impacts the kind of workout you’ll have. Hiding out mid-pack may keep you comfortably protected in the draft of the peloton, but it opens up your risk of colliding with those around you. Conversely, sitting up at the front means expending significantly greater effort, but also greatly decreases the crash factor. Hanging in for all 10 laps to the final sprint takes focus and fitness!

The Bowl is a 3.3-mile clockwise oval loop. A good solo time trial effort takes between 7:15 and 7:40 to finish each lap. As a group, however, sub 7-minute laps are not uncommon. On one side of the oval, there’s a steady 2%–4% climb followed by a short flattish section where the group pushes the pace through a long false flat as it turns at the top of the oval. This section takes about 3 to 4 painful minutes. As the group makes the next right turn, it heads into a very long and very fast small downhill

section. It's not enough of a downhill to run out of gears, so riders are recovering here but at a higher intensity.

This class tackles 6 of the 10 typical laps. It includes a 10-minute warm-up and an 8-minute cool-down.

Profile Objective and Intensity

Today's winner-takes-all-the-glory class is entirely about building threshold power and aerobic capacity while experiencing the thrills of a circuit-style, mass-start race. After your warm-up, you'll complete seven 3- to 4-minute VO₂ max intervals with 3 minutes of fast-leg recoveries. This equates to 100%–120% FTP, RPE 7–8. On your last lap, you'll build your final interval to a true standing 20-second sprint for the line (RPE of 10).

You should feel pretty gassed by this ride. If you're using a power meter, your intensity factor (IF) can range from .85 to 1.

Cueing Tips

Six VO₂ max reps with a true big gear sprint to finish is a very demanding workout. It needs constant and regular cueing. If you don't have cadence meters, make sure riders are getting the proper intensity by doing regular cadence checks during the "work" intervals. We do this by having them count the number of times their knee taps their open palm in a 15-second period (then multiply by 4 to get their rpm). Their resistance should really hold them a count of 21 to 24 per 15 seconds, which translates to 81–88 rpm.

Riders will be working hard to push over that resistance for the duration of each VO₂ max interval. For the "rest" interval, take off a "gear" and let the riders spin it up to 25–27 in a controlled way. If they are bouncing in their saddles, they need to focus on using both the fronts and backs of their legs in the pedal stroke. That's a good opportunity to remind them to check in with their form.

I use other reminders and cues to keep riders focused and aware throughout the workout, such as:

Keep your upper body relaxed and stay light on the bars.

Pedal in full, round circles by grabbing the pedal with your feet as you sweep it back.

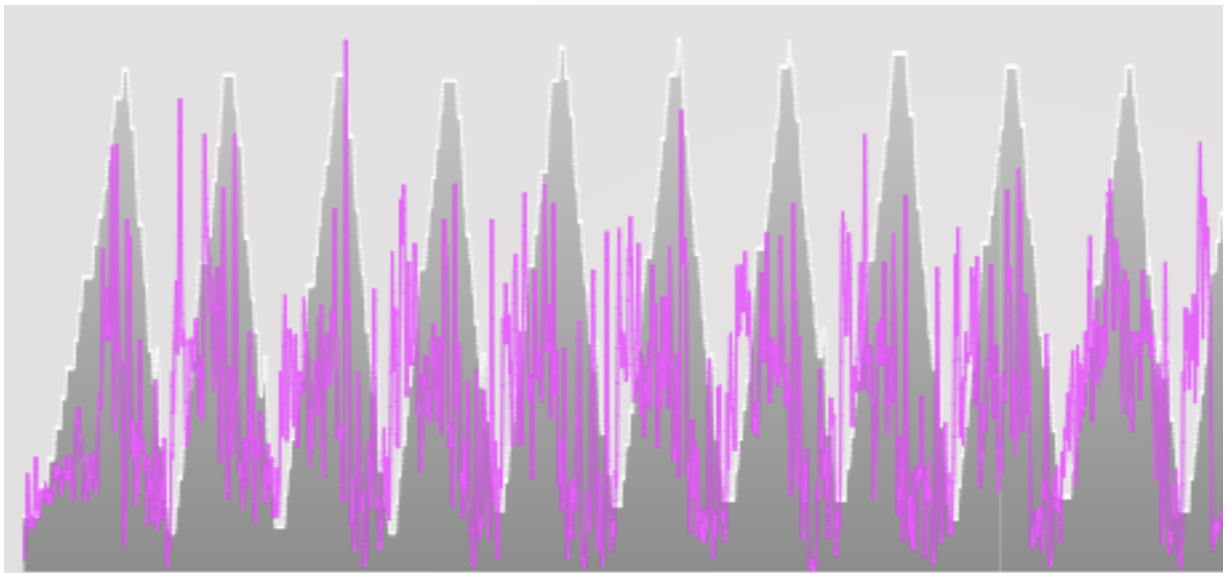
Let go of that tension in your face. Let me see those pretty smiles...

Use the inspirational cues you find most effective to keep your riders engaged during the ride, while developing class excitement.

The Music

This is an eclectic mix of music that ranges across the indie, alternative, dance, and rock spectrum. It eschews top 40 in favor of a diverse collection of songs that keeps up an emotional intensity exactly where it's needed. Keep an open mind, focused intention, and strong legs and you'll crush this ride like a boss!

Graphic Profile



This is taken from an actual ride file in TrainingPeaks. It shows 10 full laps. For our profile, we will do 6 laps. If you have a 75-minute class, though, you have time to build out a full 10-interval session.

About Bryan Yates

A competitive masters cyclist and lifelong fitness enthusiast, Bryan competes in road, mountain, gravel, and other cycling endurance events—along with being a surfing and yoga fan. He coaches physically demanding and intensely rewarding classes that focus on building strength, power, and grit. His music mix—classic rock, indie rock, and hip-hop—adds motivation (and a flash of humor) to every workout. Bryan is also a certified TRX suspension training instructor, NASM personal trainer, and a seasoned Level 2 USA Cycling coach. When not racing, Bryan can be found coaching women's racing programs and fighting childhood cancer as the ride director/coach for the Pablove Across America cycling team. He is the co-owner of Pedal Spin Studio (www.pedalspinstudio.com) in South Pasadena, CA, and also owns Locomotiv Performance Coaching (www.locomotiv.cc).

The Rose Bowl Brawl

Intro/Warm-Up

The National Anthem, Radiohead, 5:52, 92 bpm

Each week, the Rose Bowl ride starts with an easy “parade lap”—a slow warm-up lap to feel out the course and the peloton. This song has the length to be a good start. Take the first 5 minutes to let your legs spin easily on a moderate road. A moderate road feels like one is walking through the shallow end of a swimming pool—there’s resistance, but you can move gracefully.

Take this time to explain the course and its physiological demands. I have the class focus on taking in three full, deep, cleansing breaths...

Breathe in through your nose. Fill your lungs, fill your belly. Pause. Exhale fully through your mouth. Come back to this breathing when you experience feelings of fear or panic or stress during this ride.”

In this class we use an intensity scale of 1 to 10. One is how you felt 5 minutes before your alarm woke you up this morning. Ten is how you feel when you’re 15 seconds away from steam blowing out of your ears. I promise you, we will get there!

Today’s class has six 3- to 4-minute intervals where you will work at an intensity of 8. Your legs will be burning and your lungs begging for relief. Remember, it’s only 3 to 4 minutes...you can do anything for that time. If you’re using a heart rate monitor, you’ll do these intervals at Zone 5.

If you’re new to Spinning or just getting back into your fitness, just work at your own pace today. Join in the hard efforts when you feel like it and pedal at your own level when you don’t. Just don’t stop pedaling.

Tonight we’re doing the famed Rose Bowl group ride in Pasadena, California, known as the Rose Brawl. This is a regular Tuesday/Thursday night group ride that attracts some of Southern California’s fastest local pros and amateurs. It can get more than 150 riders blasting around a hard 3.3-mile loop for 70 minutes! It’s usually 10 laps with a hard finishing sprint. Tonight, we’re doing 6 laps, but don’t worry, you still get the sprint.

In the last 60 seconds of the song, have the riders speed up their cadence every 20 seconds to right before their bounce point.

Song ends. Back off to a self-selected easy pace for 60 seconds.

Leg Openers

Outside, Calvin Harris & Ellie Goulding, 4:55, 64 bpm

We continue our leg openers in this song. It's also an ideal time to focus on aligning our form on the bike and smoothing out our pedal strokes.

For the rest of this song, we'll continue opening up our legs before we get into the main set.

INTERVALS

2:00–3:00, 30 seconds hard effort against a heavy gear. Recover 30 seconds

3:01–4:00, 30 seconds hard effort against a heavy gear. Recover 30 seconds

4:01–4:55, 30 seconds hard effort against a heavy gear. Recover 25 seconds

Power Interval #1 (Intensity 8/10)

No Sleep Till Brooklyn, Beastie Boys, 4:07, 97 bpm

All right, folks, we've come around the bottom end of the Rose Bowl. We're heading into our first hard effort. The group's going to start laying down the hammer. You'll need to get into the right gear and leg speed to help drive the pace!

Set your resistance so that you feel like you're walking ankle deep in mud. It should feel challenging. Put your right palm over your right knee. When I say "Start," count the number of times your knee touches your palm. I want to you to be in the 21–23 range. If you were over, add a gear. If you were under, get there.

You're 1 minute in; your legs should be feeling very heavy. Your breathing should be up there.

Two minutes in, 2 to go. Your legs should be on fire by now. If we were having a conversation here, you'd need to take a breath after every word.

Three minutes in, gang; we've got 1 minute to go. Who's feeling the burn? Let me hear it!

With 45 seconds to go, we're approaching the turn where your recovery will start. In the final 20 seconds, you need to tap it up, come out to the bar ends, and Run...It...Out!

3...2...1...Go!

Ten seconds to go. 5, 4, 3, 2, 1...

Back to your saddles. Come back to moderate resistance. Feel like you're in the shallow end of that pool.

Recovery Interval #1 (Intensity 5/10)

Drown in the Now, The Crystal Method, 3:33, 106 bpm

We're going to get our recovery now. You've got the next 3.5 minutes. I want you back at a 5 on scale of 10. That means you need to be breathing deeply and rhythmically. If we were having a conversation, you'd need to take a breath after every sentence or two. This pace should feel fast, but manageable.

We're now on the downhill side of the Rose Bowl. Your gearing is lighter, so your leg speed should be quicker. (Now's a good time to do another cadence check. I have my riders making 25–27 rotations over a 15-second count.)

The peloton is averaging 30–35 mph right now. You need to keep those legs moving to stay in. Some of you may be working at a higher effort 5...that's okay, but try not to burn yourself out now. I want you to get the full benefits of your "work" interval.

We are coming back around the bottom of the Bowl. We've got 60 seconds before we turn the heat back on. Do what you need to get the rest of your recovery in now. If that means you need to come out of the saddle for a moment, go for it. If you're happy staying seated, that's fine too.

Power Interval #2 (Intensity 8/10)**The Seed 2.0, The Roots, 4:28, 109 bpm**

It's time to gear...it...up! We've just rounded the corner and are back on the climb. It's still early in the ride, so the laps aren't quite as fast just yet. It's going to take you 4.5 minutes to the top of this rise.

As you are coaching this, remember the goal is to get riders to a challenging place. At this effort, it's not uncommon to have a strong burning in the legs and a shallow breathing feeling. Encourage riders to push to the other side of their comfort zones, but remember to let all riders know they can back it off if they don't feel ready to drive the effort.

We're now back on the climb. Set your gearing so you feel like you're walking in ankle- to calf-deep mud. Let's do another cadence check to make sure we're all in the same range. (Do a cadence check if needed.)

I know these intervals are TOUGH. Now's the time for you to focus mentally on why you are here. Set that focus. Find that intention. We will get to the top of this power climb and you will be one interval closer to whatever your fitness goal is.

We're just coming to a small 10-second little bump in the road. Push that gear a little harder to get over it. We're over this hump in 3, 2, 1. Come back to that leg speed of 21–23.

Only 75 seconds to go, team...60 seconds to go...30 seconds to go...

Let's come out of the saddle for the last 20 seconds in 3, 2, 1...Everybody up. Butts back over the nose of the saddle. Backs long. Light on those bars. We start our 3 minutes of recovery in 3, 2, 1.

Nice effort, everyone. Back to your saddles and recover.

Recovery Interval #2 (Intensity 5/10)**Better Run, Royal Bangs, 3:19, 86 bpm**

Let's bring that resistance back down to a hair under moderate. Spin those legs, add a couple rotations to that pedal stroke, but stay IN CONTROL.

I NEED you to focus on getting your recovery in for these next 3 minutes. Come back to long, slow, purposeful breathing. Fill your lungs. Fill your belly. Breathe out through your mouth. Let's cool that fight-or-flight anxiety you may be feeling.

We're now back on the downhill side of the Bowl. The pack is still 150 strong. Nobody is popping from the exertion yet. That means we need to stay strong and focused.

How's that recovery coming? You should be taking deep breaths, but feeling in control. This pace should feel like something you could hold for 2 hours or so.

Power Interval #3 (Intensity 8/10)

Wild Frontier, The Prodigy, 4:28, 70 bpm

Interval number three starts now! It's 4.5 minutes. Get that resistance back on. You know how it should feel now, like you're walking in ankle- to calf-deep mud. Make sure the resistance holds you to that cadence of 21–23.

In this interval, we're going to add one gear every minute. When I say "Tap it up," "Add a gear," or "Turn it up," I want to hear a cheer from all of you.

Energy creates energy, team! You are your own best cheerleaders.

During these intense "on" intervals, I try to engage my riders as a group as well as in a one-on-one way. By creating a dialogue, you can build the focus on the work while solidifying their connection to you and the class.

As with the preceding power intervals, make sure to count down the time remaining to the recovery interval.

*You've got 60 seconds left to the next song. Then we recover.
You've got 45 seconds left to our recovery.
You've got 30 seconds left.*

Recovery Interval #3 (Intensity 5/10)
Waves, Sleeper Agent, 3:35, 60 bpm

It's time to recover, team. Come back to a 5 on a scale of 10. Take a gear down to moderate or just a bit below. At 5, you should be taking deep, deep breaths, but you should not feel like you're struggling to keep up. If we were to have a conversation here, you could speak in short sentences before taking a breath. If you're using a HR monitor, then you'll be in Zone 3.

This is a race pace effort today, so our recoveries need to happen at a higher level. After all the work you've put in, this will still feel fatiguing.

Power Interval #4 (Intensity 8/10)
Younger Us, Japandroid, 3:33, 93 bpm

We're now in interval four! The pace is definitely picking up. It's only going to take us 3 minutes and 33 seconds to get to the top of this hill.

A group has broken off the front. They have 30 seconds on our peloton. We need to close that gap. Move to the front of the pack. Put on a gear and drive that pace!

If you're at your true 8 on a scale of 1 to 10, then your legs should be ON FIRE now. Keep that upper body relaxed, focus up the road, and hold this pace. Keep it up—we're pulling them back.

90 seconds left in this interval and the group is only 20 seconds ahead.

60 seconds left and we've narrowed the gap to 15 seconds.

30 seconds to go and there's a 10-second gap.

We're closing it up in 5, 4, 3, 2, 1.

Everyone's back together. Time to recover.

Recovery Interval #4 (Intensity 3–5/10)
Lonely Boy, Black Keys, 3:13, 83 bpm

By now your class has definitely put in some hard, lactate-building efforts. It is a good idea to really bring their efforts down here in preparation for the final 10 minutes, which is about a lap and a half.

We really need to recover here, team. You've ridden hard and built up a ton of fatigue in your legs. By now, the original 150 or so riders are whittled down to about 100 or fewer. Only the strong or very efficient riders remain. Spin lightly, bring your breathing down. We're tucking in behind other riders to re-build our energy stores for the final 10 minutes of hard effort.

Use all your favorite cues to get your riders back into a recovery place. If you have over-achievers in your class, give them the opportunity to recover at a higher intensity, but no greater than a 5 on a scale of 10.

*I hope you've all recovered. The final lap and a half is going to be H-O-T!
We're rounding the bottom corner of the Bowl.
You're next effort starts in 3, 2, 1!*

**Power Interval #5 (Intensity 8/10)
Somebody New, Joywave, 3:26, 88 bpm**

You will do 4 x 20-seconds on / 20-seconds off to simulate powering up the side of a peloton.

Add a gear. Make that resistance feel like you're walking in ankle- to calf-deep mud. You're in the final 10 minutes. From here on, even your recoveries are going to feel hard.

We just spent our last 3-minute recovery hiding in the back half of the pack. You need to make your way up near the front to position yourself for the final sprint. With nearly 100 riders ahead of you, that's going to take some work. Four 20-second hard accelerations should do the trick.

Add a small gear and quicken your leg speed. We're pushing up the side of the peloton, passing the other riders who are just hiding out. 10 seconds in...15 seconds in...You'll take off that last gear in 3, 2, 1.

You just motored past about 15 riders. We're sliding in behind others to recover for 20 seconds before speeding past another group.

(Rest for 20 seconds.) Now we need to make our next move up the field. Add that small gear and accelerate hard in 3, 2, 1. We're back in the gutter, driving our

pace up the side of the peloton, passing the other riders who are just hiding out. 10 seconds in...15 seconds in...You'll take off that last gear in 3, 2, 1.

Do two more of these hard 20-second on/off efforts.

Recovery Interval #5 (Intensity 6/10)
Contagious, Night Riots, 3:36, 68 bpm

We've made it to the top 20 riders with those four hard efforts! We're now rounding the top of the Bowl for the last time. Take that gear off and come back to a notch above moderate resistance. Keep that leg speed high here, but no bouncing!

You should still be breathing heavily here. If we were talking, you would need to breathe deeply after each sentence. We are keeping things fast now, because other riders are trying to move us out of position. Make sure you're keeping your intensity high, but not so high that you're spent. This is about saving enough gas for the final 3 minutes.

The peloton is coming back to the bottom of the Bowl for our last BIG effort.

Power Interval #6 (Intensity 8–10/10)
Go, Pearl Jam, 3:13, 71 bpm

Put on a gear and keep that STRONG leg speed. If your legs are feeling tired and you're breathing very heavily, then you are doing it right. This is the last lead-in to our finishing sprint to the line. You're on the climb portion. Other riders are starting to push their way up to the front of the pack, positioning themselves for the sprint.

Two minutes to go.

Keep pushing. Relax your upper body. Tighten that hip angle over your bars to drive those quads up to your belly. Keep a soft bend in your elbows. Eyes up the road! Focus. I know it's hard, but you have what it takes. We're going to add a gear. You need to maintain this leg speed, though. If you can't keep up the leg speed, then keep your resistance exactly where it is.

One minute to go. You need to be at a 9 on a scale of 1 to 10. In the last 20 seconds, you're going to come out of your saddle, hands to the ends of the bars, and sprint as hard as you can. By now those riders who tried to fight their way to the front earlier have popped off. They went too soon, but you're still in it.

In 10 seconds, you'll add one small gear and go. 5, 4, 3...hands out to the ends of bars...2,. 1, GO! Stand up, hips back, and drill it. Hard as you can, now. Stay strong. Stay focused. We're crossing the finish line in 3, 2, 1!

Beautifully done, everyone. Have a seat, bring your resistance back to moderate, and spin easily.

Cool-Down (Intensity 2/10)

The Promise, Sturgill Simpson, 4:13, 79 bpm

Bring down the resistance and focus on the recovery process. Remind riders that this time is about preparing and repairing their bodies for their NEXT workout. Take a moment to have your riders celebrate their hard effort and the commitment they showed during this very challenging profile. High fives all around!

Stretch

Dance Yrself Clean, Ms Mr, 4:30, 101 bpm

Do the stretches that work best for you and your class. I like to focus on side stretches, hip openers, hamstring stretches, neck rolls, and shoulder shrugs to loosen up the body after a hard workout.

Music Profile

Section	Music	BPM	Time
Intro/Warm-Up	The National Anthem, Radiohead	92	5:52
Leg Openers	Outside, Calvin Harris & Ellie Goulding	64	4:55
Power Interval #1 (Intensity 8/10)	No Sleep Till Brooklyn, Beastie Boys	97	4:07
Recovery Interval #1 (Intensity 5/10)	Drown in the Now, The Crystal Method	106	3:33
Power Interval #2 (Intensity 8/10)	The Seed 2.0, The Roots	109	4:28
Recovery Interval #2 (Intensity 5/10)	Better Run, Royal Bangs, 3:19, 86 bpm	86	3:19
Power Interval #3 (Intensity 8/10)	Wild Frontier, The Prodigy	70	4:28
Recovery Interval #3 (Intensity 5/10)	Waves, Sleeper Agent	60	3:35
Power Interval #4 (Intensity 8/10)	Younger Us, Japandroid	93	3:33
Recovery Interval #4 (Intensity 3–5/10)	Lonely Boy, Black Keys	83	3:13
Power Interval #5 (Intensity 8/10)	Somebody New, Joywave	88	3:26
Recovery Interval #5 (Intensity 6/10)	Recovery Interval #5 (Intensity 6/10) Contagious, Night Riots, 3:36, 68 bpm	68	3:36
Power Interval #6 (Intensity 8–10/10)	Power Interval #6 (Intensity 8–10/10) Go, Pearl Jam, 3:13, 71 bpm	71	3:13
Cool-Down (Intensity 2/10)	The Promise, Sturgill Simpson	79	4:13
Stretch	Dance Yrself Clean, Ms Mr	101	4:30