

Preparing a Training Program

In order to prepare a horse for the rigors of a specific event or discipline it is important to know just what are the energy demands of that event????

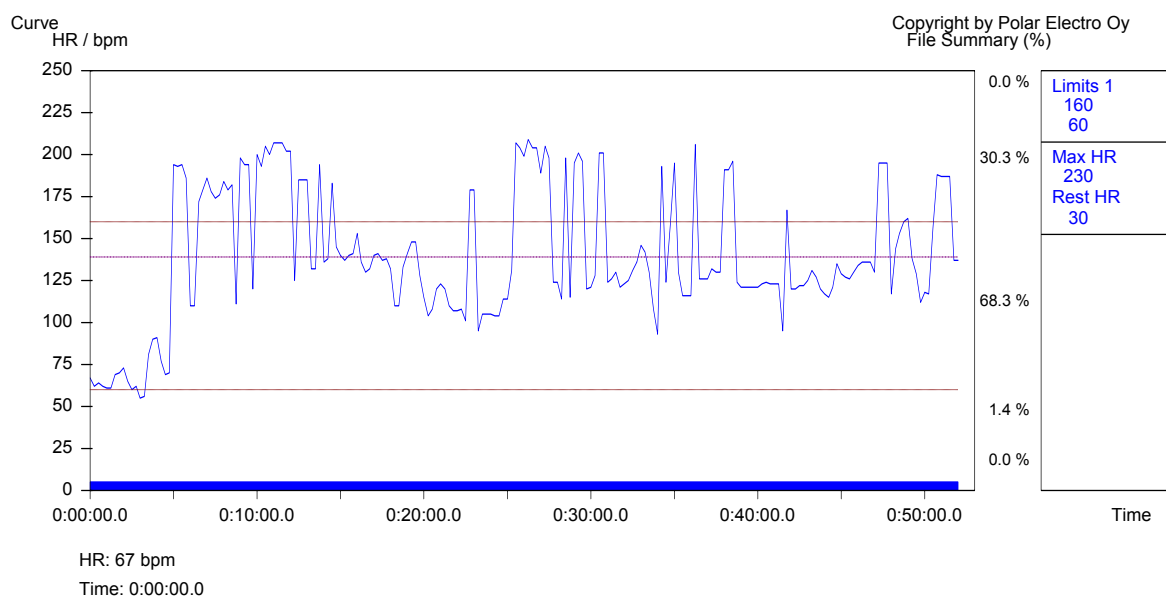
The only way this information can be obtained is by collecting your data in an actual event, then analysing just what is happening physiologically to your horse, and then preparing a training program to enable the horse to maximise the relevant energy systems.

The following example can be applied to many other disciplines.. eg cross country, etc

In Endurance riding, just how hard is your horse being asked to work for these long periods of time?

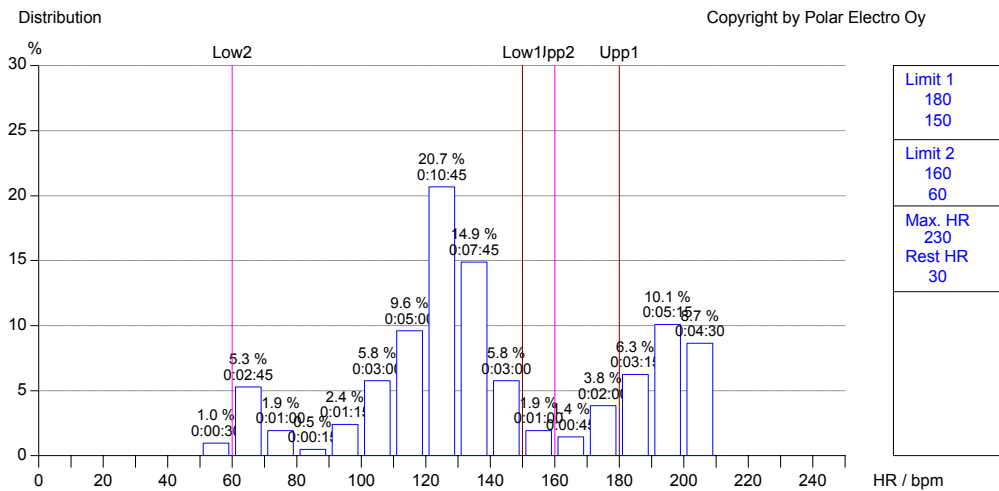
At the recent Biltmore Endurance ride, held on the 8000 acre Vanderbilt estate North Carolina, Polar Accurex Plus Horse heart rate monitors were attached to the girths of a number of riders. These units recorded the actual heart rate of the horse and stored the information on a five second sampling basis.

A section of one of the legs appears below.

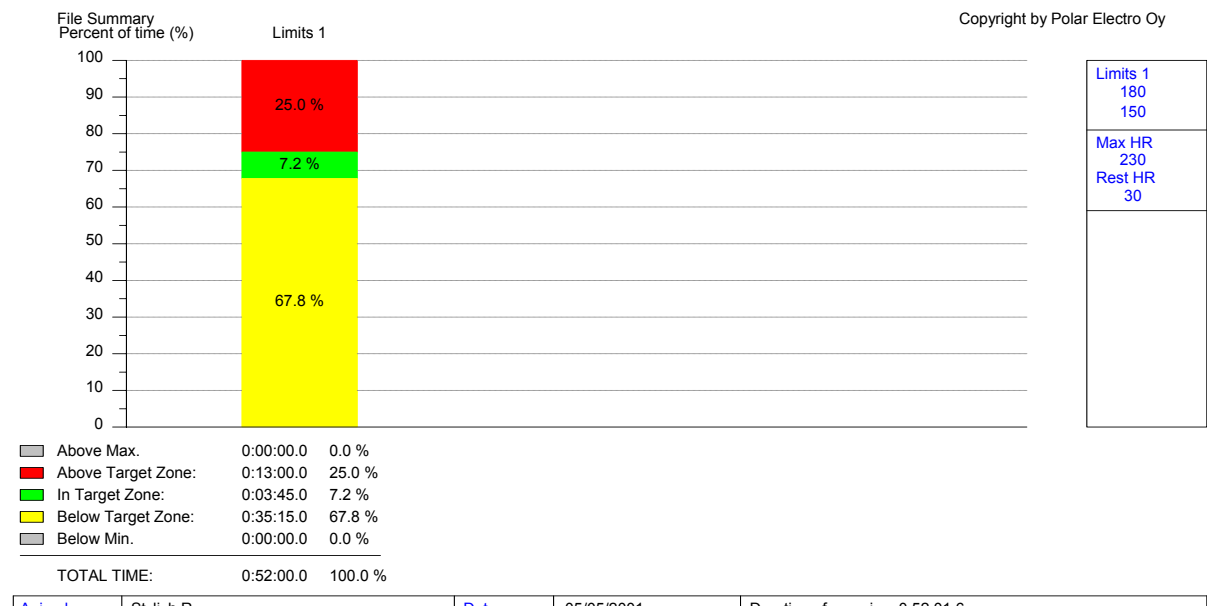


I am advised that the terrain was quite varied and contained a number of steep climbs. This is quite apparent from the considerable number of times that the horse had to work up to 200 plus beats / min.

Although for this section the average HR was around 135 it is quite apparent from the distribution chart that a considerable amount of time has been spent above 150 bpm.



In fact when I sought a zone chart using 150 bpm as the bottom of the zone, more than 30% of the horses working time was spent above 150 bpm.



What then are the implications of this information when looking at our training program?

How can we ensure that although the terrain is steep with climbs, we have the right sort of conditioned horse for the job?

Obviously, training a horse for good aerobic capacity is going to demand that they are exposed to overload in all of the major aerobic zones.

In the example above, the horse achieved a maximum HR of 215 bpm.

The working zones would therefore be constructed as follows:

60% MHR.....	129
70% MHR.....	150
80% MHR.....	172
90% MHR.....	193

Thus after providing the horse with a good base of work between 100 and 130 bpm it would be necessary to slowly work the horse over sessions which would cover the above zones.

It would also be extremely wise to reduce the volume of your workouts as the intensity of the session increased.

It would also be necessary to ensure that adequate recovery was provided before the next session was undertaken.

I hope this actual information can assist riders to develop a protocol for examining their own activities / events and so construct specific training programs for their horse.

Mike Nunan