

Being a pro cyclist, in continuing it's not always accurate, glamorous image, sometimes presents itself with incredible opportunities. In this situation, four of us from the Fly V Australia cycling team were invited to the Quarq/Hunter Allen Power Training Camp in Spearfish, South Dakota. I'm a self-confessed training junkie myself – I love power meters and I enjoy interpreting the data – so I came to the camp with much anticipation and I had a great time.

I was travelling to the camp through Chicago O'Hare airport, otherwise known as the US's Bermuda Triangle for luggage when I boarded my flight to Rapid City, SD. Unbeknown to me, I had to kick some guy out of my seat who was actually travelling to the camp as well! I had my cap on, dark sunglasses, a well rehearsed foreign accent and I had grown a beard just so I could travel without recognition, but I failed to realize that I would be the only one carrying a big TT helmet case on the way to such a small destination. The region is otherwise known for the Sturgis motorcycle rally...not sure if they would accept a lycra-toting, TT helmet wearing cyclist into their mix. I was revealed! Travelling in the US, I am amazed by the friendly and generous people that I meet, and I say this after travelling all over the world for the past 9 years. Mike and I started chatting, with him obviously not holding any grudges for my seat insistence and a couple of hours later, we were in a rental car on the way to see Mt Rushmore....you know, those big presidential carvings in the side of the mountain where Austin Powers had his lair and all those actors plunged to their deaths, after hanging onto Lincoln's nose!



With the extent of my tourist-ing patience used up, Mike and I then headed off to the camp to meet with the Meyer family - responsible for the Quarq Power Meter, Hunter Allen – the man who has inked some of the best interpretive knowledge of training with a bicycle power meter (and literally the author of “Training and Racing with a Power Meter”), the camp participants from all across the US and three of my teammates, PhilZ, Grabbo and Nate.

Spearfish, South Dakota has some incredible riding, beautiful mountains and rolling hills. I can't imagine that people would find a lot of reason to visit this part of the world, so I consider myself privileged and enriched to have spent a few days in this little unknown mecca. Out on the road, Hunter had us all perform several field tests – 20 minute efforts, 5 minute efforts, big gear sprints, small gear sprints and race simulations using the Quarq PMs. This mix of Fly V riders aren't exactly the team sprinters and we did our best trying to look like pro cyclists whilst flailing on the bike to outsprint each other, with some harsh sledging words and some obvious dirty tactics. We were integrated into this group of riders who all cycle for different reasons, but for all whom cycling is something of joy. Getting this perspective was something I certainly appreciated and many friendships were formed.



After the training sessions we were treated to a tour of the Quarq factory headquarters where Jim Meyer is ready to take the world by storm. Even though I like training data and stuff, I think engineers do become a little strange and foreign at times and a few of the machines in there had me at a loss. But it is this brilliance that has enabled the birth of the Quarq Power Meter which all the camp participants used throughout the 4 days of the camp. The Quarq was great, working flawlessly on my machine and I am going to be using this power meter into the future now. It doesn't give up anything to it's competition, except for the current requirement of needing to use a crank with a removable spider (eliminating Shimano and Campagnolo cranks) but thankfully there are some great cranks that can be used on any groupset that you use. The unit is lightweight, accurate, easy to use and service, half the price of other crank-based power meters and most importantly, the customer service is second to none with Mieke Meyer personally handling the phone lines. ☺ I also saw what I think may be the world's biggest puppy, Newton, a Great Dane, who wanted to go head to head with Nate. It's a little disconcerting when a dog can completely engulf your arm with his mouth in just a playful bite!



Hunter Allen, founder of Peaks Coaching Group, gathered everyone together to give some lectures on how to interpret their training data that they had compiled. It's amazing what direction you can gain with power meter figures and using TrainingPeaks software as your strengths and weaknesses are immediately highlighted. Hunter explained to us how they came up with the Training Stress Score, Intensity Factor and the Performance Management Chart, finally a way to quantify your form, which is an incredibly powerful tool. Whilst coaching is still an art form, this really brings the science into a lot more practical sense and the necessary training adaptations can then be planned for the athlete to improve. It is quite amazing what this little Quarq Power Meter can do for us.



The final official day of the camp was spent riding through the black hills with a final climb up to Mt Rushmore. I must say that it was one of the most beautiful rides that I had ever done in my life. 6 hours through undulating terrain with grassy green mountains, incredible rock formations (natural ones too this time!), wild buffalo herds, donkeys and a cool spiral descent that caught me a little bit by surprise. To all of my new friends from the camp: I hope that you guys continue to enjoy your riding, setting yourselves goals and achieving them and having the wind in your hair in the process. Please stay in touch and remember to follow the progress of the Fly V Australia team!



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