

Jay Blahnik on Introducing Power, Part 2

John Macgowan: All right. You're hearing the second half of my interview with Jay Blahnik master trainer with the Schwinn Cycling Program. Jay welcome.

Jay Blahnik: It's great to be here.

John Macgowan: We left off with a question I asked if we could revisit what you spoke about very early in the first interview as far as kind of three personalities that you're experiencing when introducing power to a traditional indoor cycling class. You know, I'll let you just review them quickly.



Jay Blahnik: We found there are kind of three big groups, you can't generalize everybody but three big groups and one group is both members and instructors who reject the premise of measurement in this space. They think that we've built something great over the last twenty years and that measurement really ruins the art and experience of the ride. And power comes to their club and they put a tower over the console and they don't even turn it on. They just believe it's the wrong direction and then there's 30% that are quite engaged by the idea, they know they've got to embrace technology there.

They're open to it, they're excited about it, they listen in training, they hear the point of view but then when it comes down to it they, they end up shying away a little bit with executing it. So you go to their classes and you know they like it but they just seem a little bit stuck and in really making it a part of their ride, so they have the will but maybe not the way. Then there's kind of the third group that loves it from the start, they're using it on the next day and they'll never go back and they'll tell you that when they got to ride a bike without measurement they feel like you put them in handcuffs and they don't know how they ever did it before, which is I fall into that category.

John Macgowan: You and me both.

Jay Blahnik: Yeah and then funny thing is I teach all classes with measurements. I've been teaching a treadmill class for almost twenty years and I would say to people, can you imagine if we had taught running classes where people were on treadmills but they didn't have any information, that was just a fast and slow arrow and you didn't know how fast you were going, you would not reject the premise of suddenly getting speed pace, you would be like yeah, thank you.

John Macgowan: No elevation right yeah.

Jay Blahnik: Exactly, it's like well it feels harder but I've no idea what I'm doing. So anyway with Schwinn what we've discovered is with the first group that rejects it, what I like to say is a couple of things that usually get people across the line but not always. And I just think that in every space there is late adopters and instead of pushing them along what you do is you bring the other two groups along and by example the third group will eventually rise to the occasion right. So in some ways you try to tell the first group is very resistant, what you think they need to hear but then you also let them go. And you spend your energy educating that are willing and/or able because what happens is, that's what changes the landscape. I mean before the iPhone most believed that the only people that needed their emails on their phone were old rich businessmen.

John Macgowan: With their Blackberry's, exactly.

Jay Blahnik: Yeah, with their Blackberry's who would want that with them at all times and now because it became sexy by thought leaders now it's the old businessmen that actually look a bit dated with their Blackberry's and it – I don't think people that are actually communicating with Smartphone's in a way that older businessmen would wish they understood. So sometimes I believe you just have to allow the early adopters to leave and make a good case and I think other people come along. I do – as a side note and you could tell I'm very robust, I'll talk about anything but as a side note I actually think we spend far too much time trying to convince the group that's not on the page. I think it's – I think you take a swing at it and if they don't get it then you allow them discovered in your own time if they ever will and it's okay.

It's like the world moves around with lots of different folks and the three group is perfectly fine to reject and if their class is busy and doesn't want measurement and they love it, I think that they should keep doing what they're doing for as long as they can until they feel the pressure at edge. But with that first group there are some things we say to them, first is technology is inevitability, you are not the first club that's going to get measurement, you're not the last that's going to get it and everyone in this space is bringing measurement to the bike. So embracing technology not only is forward thinking but if you do it you look a little less stuck. And sometimes that's a vanity play like don't look old and be the one person that says you don't know how to run the console in your club because it just can't make you seem started. But lot of people just – vanity appeals to them they're like oh, I don't want to be the one left out, right. So it's like turn it on and tell people where to look, just at least do that.

John Macgowan: Jay, excuse me but do the – the rejecters are – or is it fear based?

Jay Blahnik: Well, I mean I think if you got a class of forty people and forty bikes and its popular and they love you and you've been bringing them in there for five or six years. I think a lot of instructors think it's working the way I'm doing it if I change it I may lose some people. And honestly considering many instructors are part time, if you've gone through the very challenging work of building up your class change is scary and I

get that, I mean I get that. I always tell people I'm like I understand that, but at the same time if you've got a full class of people that love you they're probably going to follow you no matter what you do. So you can be a leader in this space by taking your very committed group of people and moving them along with you because they're unlikely to ditch you because you've brought something new.

They love you that's why they're with you, so I – but that's the second thing we say to them is, look if you've got a very successful class you're the very person that should be adopting this because you have the skills and talents to bring people along. And once they have measurement they'll appreciate it and because they respect you you'll look like a forward thinker, you're a leader and you bring them along. The third thing we say to people is, just we try to appeal to their common sense which is, hey take a look in the gym there is measurement everywhere you look. On the weight equipment people know their progress, on the treadmills people know their progress, on the elliptical they know their progress, even in yoga class you can your progress because suddenly downward dog is easier and my hills have dropped, suddenly I can hold a worrier and really lift through my spine.

I know when I'm getting better in almost every workout, where's the one place there isn't a measurement in a gym and is also the place where all the energy is, it's the indoor cycling group. So you may think that there's not a reason for measurement to be here but it's everywhere else and we're just last to the party. So when you start think that measurement is inherently is a good thing for almost everything we do in fitness, some of them just go, oh you're right it does make sense to have it in here. And then the fourth plea we make to people in this category, none of these makes sense to them you kind of let them be. The fourth plea we make is, you do not have to let this console hijack your class. There are simple ways to turn it on, use the observations to just simply let people find their own way but at least turn it on and point to it, at least turn it on and refer to it and then teach the class you've always taught.

Because what you'll find is members will suddenly comparing workouts to workouts, they'll compare hills to hills, they'll compare their progress and they'll just start negotiating with themselves and they'll find a way to let measurement motivate them. It doesn't have to be something you carry they'll carry it but at least turn it on. And usually those four or five discussion points will get that group to kind of go – I get it as long as I don't have to completely change what I'm doing I don't have to get the console hijack my class. I can just simply point it out, I do get that measurement as motivation, I do get that most people would expect to find that in the space and I do see how it could help them. It's not going to be a lot of hard work on my behalf, I'm – I mean and I'll turn it on and I'll refer to it.

John Macgowan: Well, that's a good point that just asking them to refer to the monitor – the console doesn't take a lot of advanced preparation.

Jay Blahnik: No, that's . . .

John Macgowan: And I think that's what put part of the hesitancy I'm just like oh, gosh I got to create this – that's hyper structured in class and all that, I've got wattage involved.

Jay Blahnik: Yeah, yeah.

John Macgowan: But that's not the case.

Jay Blahnik: Well, and that's the reason why as in our last discussion on our last podcast we talked about for us we believe there's three levels observations, goals and challenges. Use, wattage and measurement for those three things which means observations is the easiest one, just tell them where to look. Trust me if they keep coming back to your class and you tell them where to look, they will start figuring out what's a good day, what's a bad day, what are good numbers and they'll use that to self motivate the example of we talked about. If you remember is, when people get on a treadmill and they workout in the gym no one's saying, no one's guiding their view of the console but what do they do?

They get on there and if they say I'm going to work out for thirty minutes, thirty minutes is up and they're at 2.85 miles, they stay on until it says three. So you don't have to do much but turn it on and point and then – and they will start to negotiate. So I think for that first group that rejects measurement and power, give them a reason to believe and generally you make it easy and you let them know that it does not have to fundamentally change what they're currently doing and they usually will at least turn it on point to it. If they still reject it then I don't spend a lot of time trying to bring them over the fence because I think they will eventually get there or not based on the examples they see other people using.

With the second group the group that loves the idea but then they become paralyzed when it comes to actually implementing it, right. They come to the training they're like, oh my gosh this is the best thing ever, they did the ride with you, they love it they thought I had no idea how I did that, I beat these measurements and every time we did an interval I tried to get the same wattage from before and you hear all the stuff. And then you go to their class and they were so excited and you take it and you're like, where was all the excitement I – you didn't even mention it. And we - I've seen that a lot because working out with our launch partner Equinox, I have personally done – well I know I've done more about power or wattage trainings – our power and wattage trainings than any of other master trainers through our Equinox launches. But I've personally been to a lot of those instructors' classes and they embraced, they loved it. They weren't just blowing smoke but when you went to their class and it just – it felt a little like it was missing.

And I think that goes back to our original discussion which is I think they get paralyzed because they have to – they feel overwhelmed by how much they have to do with it and they need to remember, start simple. I mean literally if you just take your regular class, your favorite class you've taught fifty times that you in love and you simply do

something like say, let's see how far we go on the first still compared to the last still and you reset the stage timer and you just have them look. I guarantee you those people will try to match their beat second hill to the first hill, they just will. Go ahead.

John Macgowan: You used to – forgive me you used the word paralysis or paralyzed and that – and I sense that in a lot is, that they feel like they have to tell everything all at once and yeah...

Jay Blahnik: Yeah, the thing about it is, is that observations and goals are really not that far apart. It's like if you just give somebody an observation and point to where they need to look and then you give them a little thing to compare to or an idea in their head. The member really does sort it out for themselves and I always tell this person that has the will but is a little paralyzed by the experience. Don't over think it, don't complicate it and remember that the experience should actually feel a bit covert not overt. If you were to take my class at Equinox in Newport Beach on empower with wattage console, you would find that power has not hijacked the story, wattage is not overwhelming. It is a very covert thing that assists me and aids me and it aids my students but it does not take away from the art of the experience. And I can plan my entire ride without even thinking about power or wattage and then incorporate power and wattage to what I've already got planned very easily. So with this...

John Macgowan: It's not the other way around because I think a lot of people feel like they got to put together this very structured wattage based profile and then try to fit music around it and queuing and you're saying go the other way.

Jay Blahnik: Yeah, yeah there are people that are good at that. I mean they start by saying, what am I going to compare in this class, what does wattage going to mean in this class. And I don't have a problem with that as long as once again it doesn't hijack the experience and you've gone from teaching a great emotionally connected motivating inspirational ride to something that's not exciting anymore. As long as you keep the great parts of your ride, I don't care what your approach is but for those people that have the will but not the way it's usually because of what you mentioned. They're trying to go at it from power and wattage first, I just say take that great class you did and here's what I would add to it, boom and boom and they go oh it's that easy, yes it's that easy.

Remember when it feels covert it's probably just about right, it's probably just about right for the member because they like you for what you're delivering, so don't overwhelm them with too much change. People like the least amount of uncomfortable change, so you get them there in a subtle way, get yourself there in a subtle way and so for those people it's really about giving them specific examples of how power wattage measurements can help them with the rides they are already teaching. So we've learned in our program kind of the hard way that for a lot of people who have the will but not the way, you have to just be very specific. We go into our trainings now and say, look here's a hundred ways you can use wattage and power but here are the three biggies. Yeah, do this like...

John Macgowan: Just use these three.

Jay Blahnik: Use these three for the first fifty rides, climb a hill and compare the first half distance to the second half distance. Compare a flat road section of one part of class to another one, use it during the intervals to see if they can match or beat their wattage right when they're feeling tired use it to motivate them to not fade on the last couple of intervals and that's it, it's like that's it. And what happens is when they have some success and they go, oh that was easy, they then discover how to go a little deeper. And then with the third group, the group that loves it from the start and you go into class and they're using it from square one.

What I caution them about because clearly like you, like me, like someone like Jules and many of the other people you work with it's like they never want to go back. Like they get power and it's like if you take the console away from me I'm switching gyms, it's like I can't go into some place else to teach because I can't do without it anymore. The danger with that group is that they then become obsessive with power and wattage and they – my good friend Josh Crosby who I do these running programs with, he says they get stuck in the console vortex where that console sucks the life out of their coaching, it sucks the life out of their emotion and suddenly they're using it so much that they don't realize it's become the coach and you forget that people showed up for you.

So with people that are embracing it I just say to them, don't forget they're still there for you, they're still there for a coaching experience and even the world's greatest athletes who use measurement in their workouts from heart rate to power taps to whatever. They will tell you that when they're going up a really tough hill and they're having a good day or bad day or whatever it is, there are times when they look at the measurement because it doesn't matter they still got to get their butt up that hill. And they got to get up there on a certain time and they've just got to do it and they got to dig past whatever the heart rate monitor is telling them, whatever the console is telling them. They simply got to get it done and that's a hard thing, that's an emotion thing, that's a motivation thing not a measurement thing. So just don't let your technology enthusiasm overwhelm what also needs to be an emotional experience.

John Macgowan: It's interesting as you're speaking Jay I'm – and I'm thinking through because I wanted ask you the question now which group are you taking to, the instructors or the members – the participants but in actuality both instructors and members fit in these three category, don't they?

Jay Blahnik: Absolutely.

John Macgowan: And their responses are going to be similar to both groups.

Jay Blahnik: And I think the thing we have to be careful with John is, remembering that sometimes your class and you are not matched. And what I mean by that is you get ..

John Macgowan: Oh, I know what exactly you're saying but go on.

Jay Blahnik: You get the instructor that's completely rejecting measurement and completely saying this is going to ruin the entire experience not realizing that they have a classroom full of people that would love it. They just don't know it, they're the ones that are afraid, their members will be like, oh my gosh I burned – I didn't know I was putting that many calories because they never knew, right or they didn't realize they could work that hard because suddenly they saw that wattage was going up week after week and they're like, wow. I was judging my intensity based on my leg burn and I never knew, I didn't have any resistance on the bike and now I'm realizing that wasn't really leading to much wattage and now I'm really getting my oxygen exchange up and not just my leg burn.

And I'm actually turning the knob and they're – they feel empowered, so I always say, look there – it's both the member and instructor that fall in these three buckets. But sometimes the instructor believes they know their members and they're speaking on their behalf and they don't. Just like there's a lot instructor that are in the third group like you me where we embrace technology, we embrace measurement, we embrace motivation and we forget there are people in that room that like care the less about it. And we've just got to be careful to make sure that our preconceived notions don't overwrite our groups, which is why that middle ground is – that sweet spot is really important. If I got forty people in the room, there will be a few that don't care about it at all, a few that will care about it too much but almost everyone else is going to be somewhere in the middle. If you don't overwhelm them it will be motivational to just about everybody.

John Macgowan: Yeah, I can see this as being very valuable to the lot of instructors to hear this and almost like I need to get participants listening to it as well.

Jay Blahnik: Yeah, yeah and one of my favorite things about Apple, the company Apple is that they do a great job of not dissecting what divides people but finding out what unites people. And I think that – I use that a lot as a philosophy for our programming to say, look if I was to ask twenty people what's going to motivate them I would get twenty different answers. And if I said to them here's this console what will motivate you I'll get twenty different answers but if I dig deep I'll find the things that motivate everyone. And my job as a teacher is to say, what are the common denominators that – of the forty people in my room are pretty much going to hit everybody.

And those are things like am I getting better, did I – was I motivated to go harder than I would otherwise, did the time fly by faster in this class versus the class where we covered the console. Did sixty minutes feel like thirty, everybody loves these things right, no one's going to tell you I like to go to a class that feels twice as long as it actually is, no one's going to tell that. So like when you think about what your night says then it's easier to say, look there's some common things about power, wattage and measurement that I can be pretty sure to hit everybody with that are – I know are going

to be beneficial. And that's where we want to land in the early days and then I think we'll have permission in the next three to five years to decide how power or wattage, you know, segues, right.

I think there will be classes that are all periodized where you go in and you're part of an eight week thing and everyone's in the same program and you're using power, wattage and measurement to train for something as a group. I think that's – that we'll see that more and more, I think there's going to be people that collect their information. We're already working on new console experiences that will let you know more or else your information and obviously we all agree that having the ability to track your workout is interesting to some people but not to everybody. I think we're going to see measurement go a lot of different directions.

John Macgowan: Jay does that cause you to have more segmented type classes, so I mean there's – there're is on the schedule as something very specific?

Jay Blahnik: I think that that's fine, I just think that once again it gets us to step three and four and my experiences were at step zero still. So we get pushed by a lot of the loud majority of people who love technology to get what's next, what's next, what's next and I'll tell you what, being in the field as someone who does – I train thousands of instructors a year literally in power. What I find is they're still not enough of us just embracing the basic premise of it to be worried about what steps three and four are. So before we start segmenting classes let's get everybody on the bus and then we decide – we can decide that some want to go to Hawaii and some want to go to Arizona and some wanted to go to New York but if they're not on the bus we're not going anywhere.

So we have to be careful as early adopters not to accelerate where we want them to be but I do think it's on their horizon I think that once we get 80% of instructors embracing measurement and once we get 80% of clubs with power in it because we are not even near yet. I mean those of us that have the good fortune of teaching on wattage and powered bikes, you start to think this is kind of common, but when you look at the critical mass of installations of bikes out there, it's like such a small percentage of people that are having this experience. We want to rise to step three and four and I just actually want to get all clubs to embrace measurement.

John Macgowan: Do you have an understanding of market penetration?

Jay Blahnik: It's small, I mean compared to – because you got to remember its like even if – I can't sell share sales numbers but when you think about you know...

John Macgowan: Just in a percentage of available studios?

Jay Blahnik: It's very small, because you got to remember that even if you were to take us and say at Schwinn that the number two indoor bike manufacturer in the world and I know our numbers even of the bikes we sell there's a huge amount of them that are not installing with power, because there could be lots of reasons not because they

reject it maybe they're just not ready for it, maybe they're not in their budget I mean they got to replace their bikes and they like our bike but they can't add this add on to it. Fortunately our bikes are allied to add it on later but even if you look at that and we're just a microcosm of the rest of the industry. It's still really small but that doesn't mean we've been take into account but that's just new bike sales.

Think about how many clubs have six and seven year old bikes, so when you think of the big scale we're talking – it's not even 5% I'm sure of the total amount of people that are having indoor cycling experiences. So I think that we get bored of the conversation of the basics of how this can be used but until there is critical mass installation and we get more and more consumers experience it and more and more instructors experiencing it, we have to be very disciplined to not try to jump ahead. And the analogy I give to people all the time is, if you take a look at the iPhone people forget that it was almost two years before they allowed it – allowed apps on the iPhone. I mean we can't even think back to a day when you couldn't put your own apps on it but if you remember there was only ten or eleven native buttons on that phone and we were all quite happy, we couldn't even visualize what the next thing was.

And now that seems so archaic, you know, if you remember the original screen on the iPhone it wasn't even filled all the way in there were some blanks. And we were all – there's no weather app, there's a stocks app, there's a – and I think that's kind of the thing here is that the forward thinkers in this space that really loved power need to be thinking about what's next. And we are I mean we're really doubling down at Schwinn to think about where do we want this to be in the next three and four years. But we have to be very careful not to let that seduce us to pretend like that's where everyone's at because what that does is it eliminates the opportunity to grow and it doesn't grow by jumping too fast, too quickly. Because what happens is then people who are trying to embrace it, they got to jump on the bus with you and me that are – it's too overwhelming there's no on ramp for them and we make it too complicated and then they go, this isn't helping, this isn't where our members are at. So the forward thinkers have to be disciplined in recognizing where the rest of the industry is.

John Macgowan: That's very wise, I appreciate that because – and I'm going to take that to heart because I've sensed that – but I ran a survey and I think about 23% of the respondents have power but I have a relatively forward thinking group here as well, so...

Jay Blahnik: Yeah, that's actually really interesting. That's certainly higher than the actual installation, but the people that are – people come to you and our organization and listen to these because they are the ones that are digging deeper and it's like an election if you can survey the wrong group you can get the right answer. If you think that your group is only 25% doing power then that gives you a sense of what a large audience is and by the way internationally it is almost nothing. I mean we know that because it's just not – they're not even there yet and so when you think about the global installation of it, it's a – it's small but I think the good news is that doesn't mean we've got to wait ten years because the number is so small now. I think what I've been

waiting for was the second that every bike manufacturer has an execution in this space, as soon as everyone has wattage and power as something that is either you have to buy it or it's optional that's when the conversation changes and we're very close. Pretty much all the biggies have it and you know that the spinning bike is probably not far off from that so, and we've seen some executions of their work and power. So pretty soon once everywhere you look there is no new bike to buy and I think what happens is, as soon as everyone buys a new bike it's at least on their consideration because that means they can't find a manufacturer that isn't pushing it out them. And that's, you know, we were there with Schwinn two years ago – two and a half years ago we were one of the lone soldiers and that's harder. But when everybody is offering it, it helps and then what happens is the curve gets really steep and pretty soon it's – the escalation happens quickly. And I think in the mean time we just keep being forward thinking, we look ahead but as early adopters we have got to be really careful about not assuming this is where everyone is at.

John Macgowan: Excellent, but we have a bright future?

Jay Blahnik: Yes, yes I mean it's great. I mean well, look at it this way my – I was telling people in this space, this category is twenty years old, I mean that might not be right, it might be older than that now but depending on when you jumped into it and when you brought it to your club the category itself is twenty seven years old. The fact that there's actually innovation in this space and interest to do something new in this space in a way that you and I know can reinvent what we're doing is astounding. I mean that is amazing that a twenty year old category still has people trying to innovate it because think of anything else in this space that's twenty years old, you're not that interested anymore. I mean we're not seeing in terms of conversations where people are going, what's new in elliptical and elliptical aren't even now...

John Macgowan: Oh, no they do try but you're right.

Jay Blahnik: No, they're making new, they do it all. I mean there's definitely new – people are making a new form of elliptical but nobody's like excited about it. I mean it's just the manufacturers wanting to have a point of differentiation, right. I mean bikes are always – they get newer and we want to have a better bike than someone else. I am not suggesting you stop innovating but it doesn't – you don't innovation with energy, you don't have innovation where – I mean Equinox, two years ago replaced all their bikes at once because they were so excited about measurement in a twenty year old category.

It's like there is energy around this, people really feel like the fact that their students could eventually be connected and could see how far they're riding and they could do a virtual road race together. I mean there's excitement around this, there's not just product innovation, people are really looking at this and going, wow we may get another twenty years out of this category with energy like we've had since the beginning. And that to me has a great sign because I think that when something is even ten years old it doesn't mean you don't keep changing that and updating that but you don't usually get the same kind of excitement that you had in the beginning. And I hear people looking at

this almost like they're starting over, like it's a brand new thing and I think that's fantastic.

John Macgowan: Right and they are. Yeah, when you look at the normal product development it does ramp up and it's early like everybody starts competing and improving, competing and improving but then it flattens out very quickly. And little change – the changes are very small incrementally but yeah, we're seeing a huge upward – from something that was relatively benign I guess. So yeah, so again like I said we have a bright future.

Jay Blahnik: It's a bright future and to me I look at it in kind of go as someone who's been in this space since the very beginning and I look at program development, I train our master trainers, I develop the education and I think there's only so much you can say about doing a workout on a bike in a dark room going nowhere without measurement. And there's a point where you can always continue to be a better coach but from our perspective at Schwinn we look at this as a whole new breath of fresh air, a whole new – it's like new oxygen in this space where we feel like we have new stories to tell, new ways to educate, new coaching techniques to teach and all of those things will be beneficial to the member and the student that's in class. They're not just going to be frivolous things that keep the instructor entertained because we then know there's a lot of that. We have to stay entertained as well so we can stay excited about this space but there are really things that could benefit the member and the student and that to me is really exciting. And it's where all of our energy is being spent in the education field, how can we do more of that around this new idea of measurement.

John Macgowan: Awesome. Jay where would somebody go to find out where you're going to be next?

Jay Blahnik: So the – they can go to my website jayblanik.com and I've a section that – a list appearances both when I teach because I still teach classes on a regular basis and then where I'm going to be appearing in terms of conventions. It's not a complete list but 2013 is already up there, so my schedule for the big events is already booked. There will be additional things, so I do a lot of things that are not scheduled on that list for some of the partner club chains we work with such as Equinox. I'm in – four times a year I'm in New York actually doing regular training courses, which I haven't done for a long time. So I'll be doing that again next year, those aren't on the schedule but they can email me and then they'll see me on the events schedules and I love to hear from folks that are excited about this space, so hopefully I'll get to meet some of the folks that are listening.

John Macgowan: Oh, awesome. Okay and so – and then there's a contact form or something on your website?

Jay Blahnik: Yeah, they can reach out to me directly and then obviously through Schwinn as well. That lists where we're going to be – I tend to do our bigger events, we do a lot of events each year, I tend to do some of our bigger events in some of the

bigger cities but I'll also be doing a lot of – on regional stuff next year. So lots of opportunities to connect with folks that are interested in this space and I love to hear feedback and pods.

John Macgowan: Awesome. All right, with Jay Blahnik the Schwinn Cycling and thank you for joining us today, we really appreciate it.

Jay Blahnik: Thank you for letting me prattle off about my passion.

John Macgowan: Oh, yeah it came through loud and clear Jay. Thank you.

Jay Blahnik: Thank you. Have a good day.