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POWER TO THE PEDAL

Shore up your weakest link for more pedaling power

Your lungs and legs aren't entirely to blame for that power drain you feel at the end of a ride. Tired ankles transfer less power to the pedals when a cyclist approaches exhaustion, a new Brazilian study found. As their cadence slowed, cyclists in the study generated more force from their hips and knees. But they had to work harder to keep their ankles stiff and became less efficient at cranking the pedals, the researchers say. One fix for Jell-O ankles: walking heel raises. "Go barefoot—that way your ankles rely on their own supporting mechanisms, not on shoes, to maintain rigidity," says Tim Pelot, M.S., C.S.C.S., a sports physiologist for the U.S. Olympic Committee. Grab a pair of dumbbells, stand on the balls of your feet, and take short steps forward for about 60 feet. Do this four or five times, 3 days a week.

PHOTOGRAPH BY STEPHEN LEWIS