

# **FATIGUE DURING HIGH-INTENSITY EXERCISE: RELATIONSHIP TO THE CRITICAL POWER CONCEPT**

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for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Sport and Health Sciences

April 2013

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## ***Abstract***

The hyperbolic power-duration relationship for high-intensity exercise is defined by two parameters: an asymptote (critical power; CP) reflecting the highest sustainable rate of oxidative metabolism, and a curvature constant ( $W'$ ), which indicates a fixed amount of work that can be completed above CP ( $W_{>CP}$ ). According to the CP model of bioenergetics, constant work rate exercise above CP depletes the capacity-limited  $W'$  with fatigue occurring when  $W'$  is completely expended. The complete depletion of  $W'$  has been reported to occur when  $\dot{V}_{O_{2max}}$  is attained and a critical degree of muscle metabolic perturbation (decline of finite anaerobic substrates and accumulation of fatigue-related metabolites) is reached. However, while the CP model is effective at predicting metabolic perturbation and the tolerable duration of severe-intensity constant work rate (CWR) exercise, it is unclear if metabolic perturbation and exercise performance can be explained by the CP model when different methods of work rate imposition are applied. Therefore, the purpose of this thesis was to: 1) investigate the efficacy of the CP concept to predict performance in exercise tests using different work rate forcing functions; and 2) explore whether the physiological bases for  $W'$  are consistent across different methods of work rate imposition. In study 1, compared to severe-intensity CWR exercise, the tolerable duration of intermittent severe-intensity exercise with heavy- (S-H) moderate- (S-M) and light-intensity (S-L) 'recovery' intervals was increased by 47%, 100% and 219%, respectively.  $W_{>CP}$  ( $W'$ ) was significantly greater by 46%, 98%, and 220% for S-H, S-M and S-L, respectively, when compared to S-CWR, and the slopes for the increases in  $\dot{V}_{O_2}$  and iEMG were progressively lowered as the recovery work rate was reduced. In study 2, both the  $\dot{V}_{O_{2max}}$  and  $W_{>CP}$  were similar across incremental cycling protocols that imposed a fixed ramp rate and cadence ( $4.33 \pm 0.60$  L·min<sup>-1</sup>;  $14.8 \pm 9.2$  kJ), a fixed ramp rate with cadence self-selected by the subjects ( $4.31 \pm 0.62$  L·min<sup>-1</sup>;  $15.0 \pm 9.9$  kJ) and a step

incremental test where subjects were instructed to select power output according to prescribed increments in ratings of perceived exertion ( $4.36 \pm 0.59 \text{ L}\cdot\text{min}^{-1}$ ;  $13.0 \pm 8.4 \text{ kJ}$ ). In study 3, the  $\dot{V}_{\text{O2max}}$  and  $W_{>\text{CP}}$  were also not different across a 3 min all-out cycling test ( $4.10 \pm 0.79 \text{ L}\cdot\text{min}^{-1}$ ;  $16.5 \pm 4.0 \text{ kJ}$ ), cycling at a constant work rate predicted to lead to exhaustion in 3 min until the limit of tolerance ( $4.20 \pm 0.77 \text{ L}\cdot\text{min}^{-1}$ ;  $16.6 \pm 7.4 \text{ kJ}$ ) and a self-paced 3 min work-trial ( $4.14 \pm 0.75 \text{ L}\cdot\text{min}^{-1}$ ;  $15.3 \pm 5.6 \text{ kJ}$ ). In study 4, after completing severe-intensity exercise ( $>\text{CP}$ ) to exhaustion, muscle homeostasis ([PCr], pH, [ADP] and [ $\text{P}_i$ ]) returned towards baseline and subjects were able to exercise for at least 10 min at a heavy-intensity work rate ( $<\text{CP}$ ); however, when the work rate was lowered but remained in the severe-intensity domain ( $>\text{CP}$ ), muscle metabolites ([PCr], pH, [ADP] and [ $\text{P}_i$ ]) did not recover and exercise tolerance was severely limited ( $39 \pm 31 \text{ s}$ ). Finally in study 5, during severe-intensity intermittent knee extension exercise, the tolerable duration of exercise was  $304 \pm 68 \text{ s}$  when 18 s recovery was allowed and was increased by  $\sim 69\%$  and  $\sim 179\%$  when the intermittent recovery periods were extended to 30 s and 48 s, respectively. The increased exercise tolerance with longer recovery periods occurred in concert with increased  $W_{>\text{CP}}$  ( $3.8 \pm 1.0 \text{ kJ}$ ,  $5.6 \pm 1.8 \text{ kJ}$  and  $7.9 \pm 3.1 \text{ kJ}$  for the intermittent protocols with 18, 30 and 48 s of recovery, respectively) and a delayed attainment of critical intramuscular metabolite concentrations ([PCr], pH, [ADP] and [ $\text{P}_i$ ]). Therefore, the results of this thesis demonstrate that fatigue during various high-intensity exercise protocols is influenced by the capacity to complete work above the CP ( $W'$ ) and that  $W'$  depletion is linked to the attainment of  $\dot{V}_{\text{O2max}}$  and the attainment of critical levels of intramuscular [PCr], pH, [ADP] and [ $\text{P}_i$ ]. These findings suggest that the CP model can be adapted to predict the degree of metabolic perturbation and exercise performance across a range of exercise settings in humans.

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*Symbols and abbreviation*

[ ]	concentration
$\Delta$	difference
% $\Delta$	% difference between GET and $\dot{V}_{O_{2max}}$
$^{31}\text{P}$ -MRS	$^{31}$ phosphorous nuclear magnetic resonance spectroscopy
ADP	adenosine diphosphate
ATP	adenosine triphosphate
$\text{Ca}^{2+}$	calcium
CI	confidence interval (e.g., 95% CI; CI <sub>95</sub> )
CO <sub>2</sub>	carbon dioxide
CP	critical power (i.e., asymptote of the power/time hyperbola)
EMG	electromyogram
ET	endurance training
GET	gas exchange threshold
H <sup>+</sup>	hydrogen ion/proton
HR	heart rate
iEMG	integrated electromyogram ( $\mu\text{V}\cdot\text{s}$ )
K <sup>+</sup>	potassium ion
MVC	maximal voluntary contraction
O <sub>2</sub>	oxygen
P	power output
PCr	phosphocreatine (or creatine phosphate)
P <sub>i</sub>	inorganic phosphate
T <sub>lim</sub> / T <sub>e</sub>	limit of tolerance/ time-to-exhaustion
$\dot{V}_{\text{CO}_2}$	carbon dioxide output

$\dot{V}_E$	pulmonary ventilation (expired)
$\dot{V}_{O_2}$	pulmonary oxygen uptake
$\dot{V}_{O_{2max}}$	maximum oxygen uptake
$\dot{V}_{O_{2peak}}$	peak oxygen uptake
W	watt
W'	curvature constant of the hyperbolic power-duration relationship
WR	work rate

***Declaration***

The material contained within this thesis is original work conducted and written by the author. The following communications and publications are a direct consequence of this work.

***Publications***

**Chidnok W**, DiMenna FJ, Bailey SJ, Vanhatalo A, Morton RH, Wilkerson DP, Jones AM. Exercise tolerance in intermittent cycling: application of the critical power concept. *Med Sci Sports Exerc.* 2012; 44: 966-76.

**Chidnok W**, Dimenna FJ, Bailey SJ, Burnley M, Wilkerson DP, Vanhatalo A, Jones AM.  $\dot{V}_{O_{2max}}$  is not altered by self-pacing during incremental exercise. *Eur J Appl Physiol.* 2013; 113: 529-539.

**Chidnok W**, Dimenna FJ, Bailey SJ, Burnley M, Wilkerson DP, Vanhatalo A, Jones AM. Effects of pacing strategy on work done above critical power during high-intensity exercise. *Med Sci Sports Exerc.* 2013; [Epub ahead of print].

**Chidnok W**, Fulford J, Bailey SJ, DiMenna FJ, Skiba PF, Vanhatalo A, Jones AM. Muscle metabolic determinants of exercise tolerance following exhaustion: relationship to the 'critical power'. *J Appl Physiol*, 2013; [Epub ahead of print].

***Conference communications***

**Chidnok W**, DiMenna FJ, Bailey SJ, Vanhatalo A, Wilkerson DP, Jones AM (2011). Effect of ‘recovery’ intensity on oxygen uptake and exercise tolerance during severe intermittent cycling (Abstract). *BASES Annual Student Conference, University of Chester, UK*.

**Chidnok W**, DiMenna FJ, Bailey SJ, Vanhatalo A, Wilkerson DP, Jones AM (2012). Maximal oxygen uptake is not different during incremental exercise tests where work rate is self-selected or experimentally imposed (Abstract). *BASES Student Conference, University of East London, UK*.

**Chidnok W**, DiMenna FJ, Bailey SJ, Wilkerson DP, Vanhatalo A, Jones AM (2012). All-out critical power test predicts time-to-exhaustion during ramp incremental and constant-work-rate exercise (Abstract). *Med Sci Sports Exerc*; 44(5): S435. ACSM, San Francisco, California, USA.

**Chidnok W**, Fulford J, Bailey, SJ, DiMenna, FJ, Skiba PF, Vanhatalo A, Jones AM (2013). Muscle metabolic determinants of exercise tolerance above and below critical power (Abstract). *BASES Student Conference, Cardiff Metropolitan University, UK*.

***Other publications***

DiMenna FJ, Bailey SJ, Vanhatalo A, **Chidnok W**, Jones AM. Elevated baseline  $\dot{V}O_2$  per se does not slow  $O_2$  uptake kinetics during work-to-work exercise transitions. *Journal of Applied Physiology*, 2010; 109(4): 1148-54.

Skiba PF, **Chidnok W**, Vanhatalo A, Jones AM. Modeling the expenditure and reconstitution of work capacity above critical power. *Med Sci Sports Exerc* 2012; 44: 1526-32.



## *Acknowledgements*

The completion of this thesis would not have been possible without the contributions of a number of exceptional individuals and for this I am extremely grateful.

Firstly, I would like to express my deepest gratitude and sincere appreciation to my excellent supervisor, Professor Andrew Jones, for his continued support and guidance during the supervision of my PhD. Your understanding and expertise has been invaluable throughout my experimental data collection and writing of this thesis.

I will be eternally grateful, Dr. Fred J. DiMenna, for his guidance, valuable advice, your continued patience and motivation has been immeasurable and provided me with the confidence to complete this thesis during the more challenging periods.

I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to Dr. Anni Vanhatalo, Dr. Stephen Bailey and Dr. Daryl Wilkerson, for their guidance, supervision, valuable advice and comment which has enabled me to carry out the study successfully.

This thesis has benefited from important input from numerous academics and their contribution must be acknowledged. These include Dr. Jonathan Fulford for assistance with data collection and data analysis using magnetic resonance spectroscopy, Professor Hugh Morton for his vital input for chapter 4 and Dr. Mark Burnley for his vital input for chapter 5.

I would also like to thank you for excellent research group, 'Nitrate and Kinetics Team'. A number of PhD students have joined the team since my arrival at Exeter including:

Stephen Bailey, Fred DiMenna, Len Parker Simpson, Ben Hollis, Katie Lansley, Ann Ashworth, Philip Skiba, Jimmy Kelly, Lee Wylie, Matthew Black, Sinead McDonagh and Christopher Thompson. You have all contributed to the fantastic atmosphere in the team.

I must also acknowledge all the administrative and support staffs at the University of Exeter who have assisted me including Jamie Blackwell, Len Maurer, David Childs, Clare Fogarty and Alison Hume. I would also like to give thanks to all those who took part in the studies presented within this thesis, your dedication and commitment was appreciated. And then there are my participants: Jacob Durant, Harrison Evans, Stephen Bailey, Giles Hayward, Harran Al-Rahamneh, Jimmy Kelly, Jamie Blackwell, Martin Dawkins, Mike Wood, Ben Farnham, Paul Morgan, Tim Pitcher, Berg Joshua, Lee Wylie, Ralph Denn, Fitsall Jack, Sam Dudley, Ben Osman, Pearce Martin, Alex Cooper, Tjerk Moll and Satit Watchirapong.

I wish to acknowledge the National Science and Technology Development Agency, Ministry of Science and Technology, the Royal Thai Government for providing generous financial support for the undertaking of this PhD, without this support, I would not be in the esteemed position where I am today. I must also acknowledge all the administrative and support staffs at the Office of Educational Affairs (OEA), the Royal Thai Embassy, England; the National Science and Technology Development Agency, Ministry of Science and Technology, Thailand and Faculty of Allied Health Sciences, Naresuan University, Thailand.

I would like to express my thanks to Dr. Saiphon Khongkum and Chris Mawhinney, Tomomitsu Fukiage, Chaiyot Tanrattana and Dr. Weerapong Prasongchean, Dr. Sawian

Jaidee, Teerapong Siriboonpiputtana, Dr. Duangduan Siriwittayawan, Teonchit Nuamchit, Jirapas Jongjitwimol, Taweewat Wiangkham, Waroonapa Srisoprab, Boonkerd and Arom Sirichom, Surasingh Teerathan and ‘Nicky’ Satit Watchirapong for their supports and friendship during my PhD study. I would also like to thank my colleague friends, my students, my PT15 KKU friends and my teachers, for their supports.

Finally, I would like to thank my best friend ‘Niwat Jodnok’ for his constant encouragement, my dear parents and my lovely ‘Chidnok’ family for their love and support whilst near and far from motherland. I therefore dedicate this thesis to them.