

ICA Holiday Profile

Ridin' for Rudolph and the Reindeer

Intervals for the Holidays

Created by Bill Pierce
Training Type: Holiday Fun

Working HR Zones: Zone 3, 4, and 5a
Total Class Length: 60 minutes

Profile Objective and Intensity

This profile has been my holiday tradition since 2006. Holiday-themed classes may not be right for every instructor, depending on their circumstances and demographics. In my case, I don't personally celebrate Christmas since I'm Jewish, but my regular riders have a diverse religious background so I decided to do a holiday-themed class as a way to celebrate the season. I selected secular music that has no religious overtones, instead focusing on the time of the year, cold weather, Santa Claus, reindeer, and giving gifts.



I use this profile as a means to thank my riders for a great year together. Part of the holiday tradition in the US includes gift-giving, and this profile enables me to give out gifts to my riders as a token of my appreciation for their support. Selfishly, it also is an opportunity for my riders to give me an end-of-year gift, which many graciously have done over the years! ;-)

This is an "all-terrain" interval ride that includes climbing in Zones 3 and 4, along with some surges uphill or on flats at Zone 4, with a few Zone 5a (above threshold) surges. Recoveries may be Zone 1 or Zone 2, based on the riders' preferences. There may be moments of insufficient recovery. Riders have the option of beginning the next interval not completely recovered, or waiting to join in when they are ready.

Simulated pacelines are used as part of the interval training. Pacelines are used in outdoor riding as a means for a group to share the work; riders can travel at a faster speed together than any individual rider would be able to maintain on their own. The riders in front of the paceline work harder due to the headwind (up to 30% harder). They "pull" the paceline at this higher (Friel's Zone 5a) intensity for a period of time, then move to the side, allowing the riders behind to move up front. The riders who just pulled then fall to the back of the group and tuck in behind the last rider. The cyclists behind the lead rider have the advantage of the draft and are able to ride at a lower effort (Zone 3 or 4 depending on the speed of the paceline and their relative fitness). The rider at the back will slowly make his or her way up to the front to take a turn pulling; this rotation of riders repeats again and again, acting as an interval ride.

Music

Of course I use holiday music, but in this case, it's all non-traditional holiday music. Many people are so tired of hearing the same old holiday music again and again that they won't find it motivating to listen to in an indoor cycling class. Also, some holiday music is overtly religious, which won't be appreciated by a diverse class. Lastly, my musical taste is very eclectic. It would be disingenuous of me to use mainstream holiday music when I don't use mainstream music the rest of the year. There is enough non-traditional secular music available to put together a solid playlist to complement the profile.

The Warm-up

Song #1: Jingle Bells (Santa Claus Mix), Yello, 155 bpm, 4:55

As you begin your warm-up:

Happy holidays! We just received some sad news from Santa. All of his reindeer are sick. He needs some help pulling his sleigh in order to deliver presents to all the deserving good boys and girls for the holidays. We don't have any reindeer but we have these bikes that we're riding. Do you want to take our bikes up to the North Pole and try to help Santa? As we warm up, let's pretend to put them on racks on the back of our cars and drive up to the North Pole.

As the music begins, the sound of "Jingle Bells" immediately connotes the holidays. This is an instrumental version, allowing the instructor to set the mood and paint the picture. Riders should know that this is a holiday ride and they are going on an adventure. The first song allows the instructor to set the scene and paint a picture, while the riders are warming up their working muscles.

We continue heading north up through the frozen tundra. There is snow on the ground as we keep driving to the North Pole.

Continuation of warm-up, beginning of working portion of profile

Song #2: Get Behind Me Santa, Sufjan Stevens, 129 bpm, 3:37

Song #3: Carol of the Bells (A Demonic Christmas), DJ Demonixx, 130 bpm, 3:43

We've arrived at the North Pole. It's time to take our mountain bikes off the bike racks and make sure that they will work up here. Our cadence will drop as we ride them through the snow. Riding in the snow on a fat-tired mountain bike is like riding in sand—it slows the legs on a fixed-gear bike. Add enough gear or resistance to slow our legs down to 65 rpm while keeping the intensity fairly low and staying in the saddle.

That seemed to work, so now let's try riding out of the saddle.

Since the riders are still continuing their warm-up, the intensity is kept in Zone 2 with a slow cadence around 65 rpm. One minute is spent seated and one minute is standing. After this, a pattern is developed by adding load, spending 60 seconds in the saddle and 60 seconds out. Intensity is slowly increased into Zone 3 since resistance has been added repeatedly while maintaining a steady cadence of 65 rpm. This continues on for 8 minutes, 30 seconds into the beginning of song #4.

Well, riding in the snow worked but we didn't drive all the way up here just to do that. Let's attach a sleigh onto the back of our bikes, adding resistance, and try riding seated and then standing while pulling the sleigh. Don't slow your cadence.

Good, we're able to pull the sleigh, so let's add the presents, increasing resistance while maintaining the same cadence, first in then out of the saddle.

OK, we're now riding through the snow, pulling a sleigh carrying lots of presents. What's next? Oh yeah. That big guy over there in the red suit wants to jump onto the sleigh. He

weighs a lot so we need to add more resistance! But he won't allow us to slow down, so maintain our steady 65 rpm. Since we're pulling a sleigh through the snow carrying presents and Santa, we're working hard, beginning to breathe pretty heavily, but still staying below threshold.

Leaving the North Pole: Let the holiday fun (and work) begin

Song #4: A Great Big Sled, The Killers, 128 bpm, 3:56

Song #5: Nutcracker Suite, Trans-Siberian Orchestra, 104 bpm, 4:35

Now that we have the sled hooked up to our bikes, pulling Santa and the presents, we're ready to start delivering them to all deserving boys and girls. But, there aren't many on the North Pole; it's mostly just elves. Hmmm, how are we going to find our way out of the North Pole to a place that we can deliver all of these presents to? I have an idea. See that hill over there? It's very steep and ends abruptly at a cliff. Let's ride up to the top of the hill, picking up speed until we reach the end of the cliff. Then, we have to hope there is some holiday magic in these bikes to make them fly off the edge of the cliff, so we can leave the North Pole, and fly to a place where we can deliver these presents to the deserving good boys and girls.

The initial 30 seconds of "A Great Big Sled" are out of the saddle at 65 rpm, pulling the heavy load. The rest of the song may be seated or standing, at a steady cadence. Intensity drops slightly to Zone 2 or stays in Zone 3, depending on the rider's choice of gear. They are steadily climbing the hill through the beginning of the "Nutcracker Suite." When the music slows and gets more dramatic, they steepen their hill, dropping the cadence to 60 rpm. At 1:10, the energy of the song picks up and the riders are asked to increase their cadence as they get closer to the edge of the cliff. At 2:55, the hill steepens again and the cadence slows. At 3:32, with the edge of the cliff in sight and the music tempo increasing, they pick the cadence up to a surge until they are almost breathless. The goal is to have enough speed and momentum when they reach the end of the cliff to make the bike fly. This happens at 4:30... and now you can begin to recover.

We made it out of the North Pole; let's deliver the presents

Song #6: Christmas in Hollis, Run D.M.C., 95 bpm, 2:46

Note: "Christmas in Hollis" has been edited for brevity using MixMeister. The original fades in and out a few times at the end, which I deleted.

Song #7 – Happy Hollidaze, Bootsy Collins featuring Snoop Dogg, 100 bpm, 5:32

As we recover, lowering the gear or resistance from the cliff to a flat road, we look around for a clue as to where we landed. The terrain is flat, so we can increase our cadence to 90 to 100 rpm. There is a bit of snow on the ground, but we're definitely not in the North Pole any longer. The landscape has an urban look to it. We'll continue riding until we get a better idea of where we are.

At 1:18, the lyrics state "it's Christmas time in Hollis, Queens."

We're in Queens?! Our bikes have landed in New York. Santa Claus wants us to deliver presents to the good boys and girls in all five boroughs! OK, Santa, that's not hard at all! (sarcasm) First we'll go to Queens, then, we'll cross the Queensboro Bridge to Manhattan. Because there are a lot of people in Manhattan, it will take us time to get from uptown to downtown.

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As we finish Manhattan, we'll need to catch a ferry in Battery Park to Staten Island. Hurry up, the ferry is pulling away from the dock! Pick up your cadence and resistance for a brief surge to get on the ferry.

We made it! Let's recover until we unload at Staten Island.

After delivering presents to many children who were affected by Hurricane Sandy, let's climb up and down the Verrazano Bridge to Brooklyn. This is where the New York Marathon starts; the first mile is uphill on the bridge.

Entering Brooklyn, we continue to deliver presents to all the good boys and girls. We can probably skip parts of Brooklyn since many hipsters don't have kids.

Instructors, you can improvise through this entire section in New York, especially if you have knowledge of the city. You can make up bridges or hills when the energy of the music ebbs and falls. You may decide to ride through landmarks, such as the 9/11 Memorial, Times Square, or Wall Street, or through ethnic neighborhoods, such as Chinatown or Little Italy. You have 7 minutes to create visual images of four boroughs—Queens, Manhattan, Staten Island, and Brooklyn.

Finishing up in New York; where are we going next?

Song #8: Christmas at the Zoo, The Flaming Lips, 100 bpm, 2:58

The final borough in New York is the Bronx. What is the Bronx known for? The Yankees and what else? The zoo, of course! So, let's finish delivering presents in New York to the animals in the zoo.

Riders continue on a simulated flat road at 95 to 100 rpm, delivering presents to the animals, until 2:00.

Now that we've delivered presents to all five boroughs, Santa says that our mission in New York is complete. He wants us to leave and deliver presents to the boys and girls in another area. But, there is no big hill to climb like there was in the North Pole. Instead, we'll climb to the top of the Triborough Bridge, build up speed, and jump off. Let's hope that there is enough holiday magic left in our bikes to allow us to fly to the next destination. Otherwise, we'll end up swimming in the East River.

At 2:00, resistance is added. Cadence initially lowers and then builds back up to 95 to 100 rpm, with the intensity up to *hard*, as the riders surge off the top of the bridge.

We've landed; where are we? Still need to deliver more presents

Song #9: I Won't Be Home for Christmas, Blink 182, 100 bpm, 3:07

As we recover, we realize that we are dry. We must not have fallen into the East River...that's a good thing! It looks like an ocean nearby, so maybe the bikes ran out of holiday magic and we didn't fly away from New York. But wait...this ocean looks different than the Atlantic. The sun is setting over it, not rising. There are palm trees off the beach. The surfer band jamming in the parking lot confirms our suspicions. We flew across the

country to California—San Diego to be precise. Now Santa wants us to deliver presents to deserving boys and girls all the way up the coast, from Diego to the Bay. We don't have a lot of time to do it and we're riding into a stiff breeze from the north. What's the best way for a group of riders to work together to push into the wind? We know from previous classes that it's a paceline. This won't be just any paceline—it will be a reindeer paceline, in which we are replacing the reindeer! Rudolph will start out in front, followed by Donner, and then Blitzen.

The instructor should assign the riders into groups comprising the reindeer paceline. You can name the groups in honor of their favorite reindeer, perhaps the first row is Rudolph, the second row is Donner, and the third row is Blitzen. (Instructors, this is more effectively managed off our bike.) If the class isn't familiar with pacelines, you'll need to explain in detail, as described in the introduction. Once the groups are assigned and they understand the concept, they are ready to go. Rudolph will begin.

Song #10: Christmas Song, DJ Sutra, 140 bpm, 4:10

Song #11: Last Christmas, Whigfield, 135 bpm, 3:35

The wind from the north is brisk, forcing us to slow our cadence down to 65–70 rpm.

Rudolph with your nose so bright, are you ready to pull the sleigh tonight? Can you pull us from San Diego to Orange County? Donner, can you pull the reindeer paceline from Orange County to LA? OK, Blitzen, keep the paceline going from LA to Ventura County.

Each reindeer/rider pulls for 60 seconds, recovers at the back for 60 seconds, and drafts in the middle for 60 seconds. Pulling is at Zone 4, recovering at Zone 1 or 2, and drafting is a Zone 3 effort.

Reindeer paceline, at this pace we'll never get the presents delivered to all of the deserving good boys and girls in California. Can we pick up the pace if we shorten the pulls and work a little harder?

Now shorten the pulls to 30 seconds with increased intensity. Pulling is at threshold (or slightly above), recovery is Zone 3, and drafting increases to Zone 4. There is 4:30 remaining in the paceline. You may decide to guide them to California landmarks along the way to and around the Bay Area, such as San Luis Obispo, Big Sur, San Simeon, Monterey, Carmel, Silicon Valley, Berkeley, Oakland, wine country, Marin County...before ending in San Francisco.

Heading home for the holidays

Song #12: Christmas Eve (Sarajevo 12/24), Trans-Siberian Orchestra, 124 bpm, 3:10

We've finished delivering presents to all the good boys in California. Santa's happy but we're not. Something is missing. Regardless of our faith or religion, we want to spend the holidays at home with family and friends. How can we get back home from San Francisco? Well, there are plenty of hills in San Francisco. Let's ride to the top of Telegraph Hill, speed up, and hope that there is enough holiday magic left in the bikes to allow us to fly back home.

The music starts slow and dramatic. Riders lower their cadence to 60 rpm to start. The tempo picks up at :30 and 1:00, as does the cadence. At 1:15 the tempo lowers, so the cadence drops as

the hill steepens. As it begins to build again at 2:00, riders continue to increase cadence and intensity until the end, at which point they should be fairly breathless.

Back home to deliver a few more presents

Song #13: 12 Days of Christmas, Reliant K, 87 bpm, 3:18

This doesn't look like San Francisco anymore! It's flat, so we can lower our gear or resistance, allowing our cadence to increase to around 90 rpm. It's cold and there is a dusting of snow around. We must be closer to home. But, we still have some presents in our bag before we can spend the holiday with loved ones. Every time we deliver some presents, we lighten our load, allowing us to lower our gear or resistance and slightly increase our cadence. We really want to hurry so we can get home.

The instructor may use this as an opportunity to give out gifts to their riders. I've provided water bottles, DVDs of one of my profiles, and CDs containing a compilation of my favorite music from the past year. You can also give out some dark chocolate, or perhaps a healthy snack, or even just a homemade notecard you made as a token of your appreciation. As the gifts are passed out to riders, every 30 seconds or so, the gear or resistance may be lowered slightly while the cadence is increased a bit.

Before we arrive home for the holidays, I want to thank each of you for a great year together. These gifts are a token of my appreciation for allowing me the privilege of riding with you each week. Thank you and happy holidays.

Recovery: Medley of holiday music

Song #14: Hey Guys! It's Christmas Time, Sufjan Stevens, 128 bpm, 4:36

Song #15: This Christmas, Donny Hathaway, 93 bpm, 3:32

Song #16: Happy Xmas (War Is Over), John & Yoko & The Plastic Ono Band, 123 bpm, 3:14

Song #17: That Was The Worst Christmas Ever!, Sufjan Stevens, 104 bpm, 3:12