

EverymanTri.com

[Home](#)

[Gear Reviews](#)

[Tri News](#)

[Training Tips](#)

[Ironman](#)

[Latest Tri Videos](#)

[Twitter Updates](#)

[Podcast](#)

[Contact/Advertise](#)

12/16/2013

Review: The Marc Pro EMS is a great addition to the recovery toolbox for triathletes



How do you recovery after workouts and racing triathlons? It doesn't matter if you are new to triathlons, racing short courses or an experiences ironman athlete of 15 years, you can't ignore recovery. Sadly, many newer triathletes think that swim, bike and run are the only thing that matters. If you want to keep swimming, biking and running for a long time, then you need to set aside time and funding to properly recover.

You can recover through nutrition, active recover through less intense workouts, watch some tv on the couch, sleep and use products out on the market aimed at easing your sore muscles. From "black box" products that market to cure any ailment to tried and tested recovery shakes and multiple recovery products, there's something for everyone.

Marc Pro (<http://marcpro.com>) approached us about testing their electrical muscle stimulator (EMS). They shipped us a unit right after Ironman Lake Tahoe and I have been playing around with the unit since then until after the Kansas City marathon in mid-October.

Marc Pro suggests that using the Marc Pro after physical activity helps move the related waste and deoxygenated blood away from the fatigued area, promoting recovery without additional muscle fatigue. Read on below for our take on the Marc Pro.



Packaging / Shelf Appeal / Marketing

You probably won't find a Marc Pro EMS on the shelf at any fitness or health care supply store. The only place to buy a Marc Pro was from their site. So, you won't see the Marc Pro all packages up to look good sitting on a store shelf. That being said, when you get your Marc Pro in the mail, it's very well packaged and doesn't look like someone packed it in their living room with home printed instruction manuals. It comes across as professionally packaged, organized and well marketed. The brochures and instructional materials are all glossy print with high end graphics and printing quality.

When taking into consideration the social media aspect of marketing, Marc Pro is covering their bases. They have an active Facebook and Twitter account as well as a robust library of Youtube videos. You can assure yourself of getting lost on their social media sites.

What's even more awesome is the carrying case that comes with the unit that stores everything for easy mobility from home to the gym, crossfit pit, indoor trainer sweat shop or wherever you are kicking your butt in training.

Nothing's worse than the Beta version of a product or the one-off model that was an extra test model. That's not the case with Marc Pro. Our unit was brand spanking new with all new packaging, electrodes, cables and manuals.

The actual units are well constructed with durable rubber-based coatings that allow the unit to take a few falls and smacks without damage, not that I dropped or kicked the unit to test it out. When you inspect all of the parts, they are as good as any medical supply materials you might get or see in your doctors or PT office.

The dials, buttons and displays are all solid with no jiggling or wiggling that might be present in lesser constructed items. The display is a little dated in that it's not the leading edge of digital readings, but it's not the stone ages, either.

There's nothing cheap and chincy that I noticed with our Marc Pro unit.

Fashion / Appearance

Marc Pro did their homework when it came to design. From their web site to the cables and the units, they are consistent on colors and create an appealing combination of fit and form. The unit comes across as high end and in no way says, "we cut corners and are cheap". Cheap is the furthest thought from your mind when you get your hands on a Marc Pro.

But, hopefully you like green, because that's all the choice you have. Most triathletes like to match their kits, bikes and gear, but hopefully when it comes to recovery and your Marc Pro, you won't mind the green trim on the bag and green unit when you're lounging around getting your recovery shock on.



Fit / Function

Marc Pro's basis for post exercise recovery through EMS is the normalization of tissue through the movement of nourishment and waste. Marc Pro is specifically designed for this particular task. The Marc Pro muscle conditioning device creates adjustable muscle contractions that set off a cascading series of physiologic events. They call this a Muscle Activated Recovery Cascade, or "MARC" for short.

The process begins with the activation of Nitric Oxide (NO), which dilates blood vessels and leads to increased flow delivering more oxygenated blood and nutrients to the area. The lymphatic and venous systems also require and benefit from localized muscle activity. Because of this, using the Marc Pro after physical activity helps move the related waste and deoxygenated blood away from the fatigued area(s). This exchange of nourishment and waste, without stress or fatigue, accelerates the recovery of the muscle.

Now, with all of that technical talk, the question remains if the Marc Pro will help recovery and not create more fatigue in muscles already abused from training and racing.

I tried the Marc Pro on multiple areas in multiple configurations. Upper back, lower back, quadriceps, calves, feet, shoulders, hamstrings and a few other spots. I used the Marc pro immediately after intense to long aerobic workouts. I used the Marc Pro hours after workouts while watching garbage TV lying in bed before nodding off for the night. I used the Marc Pro as prescribed in their instructions for approximately 30 minutes at a time and on occasion more than once per day. To boil it down, I used the Marc Pro EMS

five ways to Sunday.

The operation is pretty straight forward. You have color coded cables for right and left control and everything you need to hook it up and zap yourself into recovery. You can be mildly distracted while setting the unit up, and still get it going. Don't fear, if you mix something up, then you won't electrocute yourself to death with the Marc Pro. The electrical currents are not strong enough to do that. But, you do need to avoid attaching the electrodes to your head or other regions they clearly outline in the manual. Just to be clear, you can do some damage with the unit if you attach electrodes in the wrong spot.

One issue was getting tangled up in wires. I recommend getting situated in your body position and then attached electrodes. Doing it in reverse order can result in tangling cords, pulling cables out or pulling electrodes off.

Once you are set up and everything is charged and ready, you can choose from a 0.1 setting to a 9.0 setting for signal strength. Say you are working right and left calves at the same time, you can use the separate channels for the Marc Pro to adjust for each leg. As we all know, bodies are not exactly asymmetrical, so one side may perceive the electrical stimulation more strongly than the other at the same setting. This is important because there are times at which the signal is very sharp feeling at higher settings to achieve noticeable muscle contractions. It's very advantageous to have a unit to adjust strength for each side.

Speaking of electrodes, this is where the age old question of men shaving their bodies comes into play. If you save your body hair and subscribed to No-shave November, then you might be in for a painful electrode removal. The sticky side STICKS. You will need some elbow grease to get the pad off of your skin and if you have hair, it will pull that, too. Surprisingly it doesn't pull the hair out by bunches, but pulls just enough to wake you up.

They sent several electrode pad replacements for us with our unit, but I found that one set of pads will last a long time. I went a month of

once a day at least uses, and didn't need new pads.

I established that breaking out the Marc Pro, setting up and usage is pretty straight forward, but how did it live up to the recovery claims and non-fatigue in the process?

Well, if you watch their demo videos, you can clearly see that the unit will indeed create strong muscle contractions. Our experience was no different when you start upping the signal strength. At the highest setting, for an average adult male, the Marc Pro can create strong enough contractions in large muscle groups to shake beds and couches. I can't tell you how many times the wife stated, "can you turn that down, you're shaking the bed and I can't read my book". So, if you are looking for the rough stuff, you might investigate the proper location for your session away from innocent bystanders.

After trying out all areas and all settings, I found that immediately after a high intensity Marc pro session, the muscles directly worked were somewhat fatigued in the sense of a post-sports massage therapy way. Maybe "flushed" would be a better description. If you have had a deep tissue massage, you should notice a difference after all of the junk in your muscles has been pushed into your bloodstream. You might feel a little fuzzy and your muscles should feel a little worked over. Then they push the water to get that crud into your kidneys and out through urine. The Marc Pro EMS experience is very similar.

After 10 to 15 minutes from the end of the session, there is no residual "fatigue" or stress in the muscles and you can go about your business. I even were able to hit high intensity training sessions later the same day without any ill effects.

Was the Marc pro therapy the end-all be-all muscle recovery solution? If you are taking care of yourself to begin with, you might not notice an immediate obvious impact. I say obvious, because though you may not notice a direct positive impact, there will be subtle advantages over time that fatigue from workouts and soreness will be reduced. I did notice mornings after long aerobic workouts were not as filled with sore muscles and limping around the house. Less of that jell-o leg feeling while going up and down steps.

Without conducting studies and measuring workout metrics, it's hard to put a number or say without a doubt that the Marc Pro resulted in harder and faster workouts. I stayed injury free and were able to function in daily life with less physical stress and fatigue from the part time job that is Ironman training. So, points there. If you cannot get out for a sports or deep tissue massage, it was great to just be at home and throw on the electrodes at any time. You could potentially do it at work or wherever since the unit can hold a charge without needing a plug-in.



Cost

Here's where you may gasp. You can get a bare-bones EMS unit for maybe \$200 on the internet, but the advanced Marc Pro EMS will cost you \$650 in one payment or \$54 for 12 months. So, if you do want one, at least you have options to afford it over a spread out time period.

The average to beginner triathlete or endurance athlete may not need something of this nature and be able to afford it. Once you get to half to full ironman distance racing, it may make more sense to find ways to stay on top of recovery. For the price of one 60 minute massage per month, you could own a Marc Pro and get a treatment as many times a week as you want.

You get what you pay for. The Marc Pro is medical grade quality and designed with consumers in mind. You don't have to be a physical therapist or nurse to hook it up and use it, which saves time and money if you can use it from the comfort of your own home. There are ideas to weigh when deciding where to spend your triathlon dollars.

Final thoughts

The Marc Pro EMS is a great addition to the recovery toolbox for long course triathletes. If you can afford one, or can adjust your spending to fund the monthly payments, then you have at your disposal a great tool to keep your muscles flushed and ready for the next workout on a consistent basis. If you cannot afford weekly massages to get that lactic acid and cellular crud buildup out from tough workouts, then the Marc Pro may be a valid solution. Replace one massage a month with a Marc Pro payment, and you are in

business.

With the straight forward and simple operation, you won't need to make an appointment and pay your copays with your PT to get the same treatment. You have medical grade recovery at the comfort of home and at your convenience.

Disclaimer

Writer's Note - Marc Pro sent us a unit and a return shipping label for this review with no charge and in no way influenced this review.

Ryan Falkenrath is devoted family man balancing faith, family, Triathlon Coaching and racing. He is a certified USAT Level 1 Triathlon coach (www.SetThePaceTriathlon.com) and has formally raced endurance events since 2001 from 5k's to Ironman distance races.

Ryan is racing Ironman Chattanooga in 2014 to raise funds for Ride to Give and Mended Little Hearts. You can follow his adventure on



Facebook at [Tri for a Hand Up](#), give to his [Fundrazr](#) campaign (), read more of his writing at [Endurance Sports Examiner](#) follow him on [@TriJayhawkRyan](#) or email him at Ryan.Falkenrath@SetThePaceMedia.com.

Posted on 12/16/2013 in [Reviews \(gear\)](#) | [Permalink](#)

Reblog (0) | [Tweet](#) | [Switch](#) | [Digg This](#) | [Save to del.icio.us](#)

Comments

Comment below or sign in with [Typepad](#) [Facebook](#) [Twitter](#) [Google+](#) and [more...](#)

(You can use HTML tags like <i> and to style your text. URLs automatically linked.)

Email address is not displayed with comment.

POWERED BY TypePad

[Home](#)
[Gear Reviews](#)

12/17/13

Review: The Marc Pro EMS is a great addition to the recovery toolbox for triathletes - EverymanTri.com

[Tri News](#)

[Training Tips](#)

[Ironman](#)

[Latest Tri Videos](#)

[Twitter Updates](#)

[Podcast](#)

[Contact/Advertise](#)