

PREPARE for that special SPRING RACE

WRITTEN BY RICK PLATT

My past two columns covered the basics of running/walking training: taking a person from a sedentary lifestyle to the beginner level in the December 2011 issue, then the intermediate level of training in the January 2012 issue. My tips guided readers to building up to five workouts per week and up to 60 minutes per workout, over a period of at least three months.

This third and final article on basic training takes novice runners to the “advanced” level, while preparing for spring races at distances from the 5K to the 8K to the 10K.

Some runners will train without ever competing in races. But for most, having a goal of running a large race is a key motivational tool, making it easier to get out the door on a cold or rainy morning. Races are also a good gauge of your fitness level, and it can be quite satisfying to see ongoing improvement in your race times. No matter at what age you start, you can expect improvement in your race times for at least three years, often more.

And it's never too late to start. Crossing my desk recently was a story about a runner, Fauja Singh, who started his running career at the age of 89 and finished a 26.2-mile marathon recently at the age of 100 (and he wasn't last, finishing ahead of five other runners). And local ultramarathon guru George Nelsen recently told me about an 82-year-old who ran a 50-miler in 11 hours, and a 76-year-old who completed a 100-mile race. Given these extremes of endurance, anyone should be able to complete 5K to 10K races.

PART III

THE ADVANCED LEVEL

RECOVERY

Always have two “recovery” days per week. These can be either complete days off, or running gentle, slow and easy for 2 to 3 miles. Since I always do interval (speed) training on Wednesdays and usually races on Saturdays. For me, Thursdays and Sundays are usually my “recovery” days and are a good opportunity to work on the upper body, either through weights or circuit training.

SETTING INTERVALS

On race weeks, much of my training occurs Monday through Wednesday, with Monday the longest running day, often done at a solid pace (i.e. an “aerobic threshold” run). Tuesday is an in-between day of distance (a couple of miles shorter than Monday) while Wednesday is a speed day. When starting speed

workouts, or “intervals,” start conservatively, with as little as two half-mile repeats, and build up gradually to three miles or more of intervals. For runners doing 5K to 10K races, the half-mile distance for intervals is ideal. For longer races, from 10 miles to the marathon, mile repeats are better. Intervals should often be around your expected race pace.

THE DAY BEFORE

The day before a race, I do a moderate workout (not the traditional easy run) with a few miles warm-up, then three or more “striders,” where I stretch out with a solid pace for up to a half mile.

THE WEEKEND OFF

For non-race weekends, Friday and Saturday workouts are similar to my Monday through Wednesday workouts, with Friday a moderate

pace run, and Saturday a harder one. Saturday is a great day for your long runs if you're not running a race that weekend.

PUSH IT, MOSTLY

Every week should include either two or three workouts that are harder than usual. These can be your Wednesday intervals, Saturday races or long runs, or Monday “tempo” runs (approaching the “aerobic threshold,” or a bit slower than race pace), or even hill strength training. The other training days should just be moderate workouts, having fun and perhaps exploring new routes. But never increase your weekly total mileage by more than a couple of miles, and never increase your weekly long run by more than a mile at a time. ■

RACE DAYS

FEB. 18

Gloucester 8K
Gloucester High School
9:30 a.m.
(804) 693-0298 or cdehoux@gc.k12.va.us

FEB. 11

Joe and Sue Moore Memorial Scholarship 5K
Sandy Bottom Nature Park
9 a.m.
danimdanim@hotmail.com

FEB. 26

Sentara Colonial Half Marathon
William and Mary Hall
1 p.m.
tribeclub.com

MARCH 3

14th Annual Fort Eustis 10K Run
Fort Eustis
9 a.m.
(757) 878-6075

MARCH 17-18

Shamrock Sportsfest Weekend
Virginia Beach Oceanfront
shamrockmarathon.com

MARCH 31

Monument Avenue 10K
Broad Street and Harrison Street, Richmond
sportsbackers.org

For more upcoming races in your area,
COLONIALROADRUNNERS.ORG

About the Author



Rick Platt, long-time president of the Colonial Road Runners, has been a serious competitive runner for

over 40 years, with personal records from 4:24 for the mile to 2:23:55 for the marathon. He is also a personal running coach, from beginners to age-group standouts. For questions on running, or suggestions for future articles in The Health Journal, he can be reached at rickplatt1@juno.com.