

CROSS COUNTRY TRAINING & WORKOUT TYPES

We do a number of different types of workouts, each with their own purpose and design. Please use the following guide to get a better understanding of the terminology used on your workout calendar, and to understand the purpose of the workouts at different stages of your training.

First of all, there is no secret or short cut to becoming a better distance runner. You have to run. Becoming strong is essential, before you can become fast. It doesn't matter at what level you start, becoming prepared to run distance is about progression, and every day you lace up your running shoes, you are making an investment in your future fitness and competitive ability. The hardest part is getting started, and creating a routine.

Looking at the season in terms of four quarters of the season, our goal is to be at our best when the meets count the most, in late October and early November. As such, the different stages of our training are as follows:

Part I: Base Training- (June & July)- 8-9 weeks

In this stage, you are building up your fitness. For some runners, that might mean starting from ground zero, where you are just learning how to run. For some, being able to run 15-20 minutes without stopping might be your initial goal. For those who are more experienced or more fit, it is about adjusting back to training after a break.

This is perhaps the most essential part of training, because without a base, you won't be prepared to race. Building a distance base is about building up your fitness, putting in the miles, expanding your cardiovascular fitness, and building up your threshold for longer, harder workouts that you will do during the regular season. The base will carry you through the rest of the season. This stage is not about building speed, rather it is about building stamina. We will incorporate distance runs (easy, moderate or long), hill repeats (great for strength training), tempo runs and some fartleks to break up the training.

You will continue building your distance base into mid-late September.

Part II: Pre-Season (August)- 4 weeks

In this stage, you will continue to build on your strength, however with the official start of practices, you will begin to ramp up the intensity. When you reach August, you will have done the base work and will be prepared for harder workouts. This will still not include pure speedwork, but the workouts will be harder and more challenging. This stage includes our team camp, so expect some mountain running. The purpose in this stage of training is to prepare you to race.

Stage III: Regular Season (September & Early October) 6 weeks

In this stage, you will start competing. Some of you will race once a week, while others will race twice. You will still maintain a reasonably high volume of work until late September- early October, but will progressively start to incorporate more speedwork, on or off the track. You will focus on different parts of the race, and as you get to later in the season, the workouts will become progressively shorter and faster. You will also have fewer hard workouts, in order to balance between racing, recovery and quality work.

Stage IV: Post-Season (late October-mid November) 2-5 weeks

This is the part of season when you want to be at our best. For some runners, this might be the last invitational of the season. For others, the district, regional or (hopefully) state meet will be the key time to peak. At this point in the season, we will cut down on our volume, and work on shorter, top-end speed. We will balance between being rested and sharp. Maintaining a peak for more than a couple weeks is difficult, so this part of the season may be catered more toward individuals or groups of athletes, depending upon how far they are anticipated to advance.

TYPES OF RUNS

DISTANCE

- **Easy**- Should be faster than a jog, but an easy day may be used to either build up miles in the early season, or as a recovery from a longer or harder workout from the day before. This should be done at a “conversation pace”, meaning that you should still be able to carry on a conversation without too much trouble.
- **Moderate**- This is typically a bit faster than an “easy” day, but it is not a tempo run. Sometimes, this is referred to as “date pace” or “as you feel” meaning that if you are feeling good and would like to push the pace a bit, that is okay, although if you need to recover a bit, that is okay.
- **Long**- Long runs are used to build up endurance. Depending upon your group and point in the season, this might be anywhere from 40-80 minutes. You should strive to run at an even pace, starting out easier, so that you can finish the full distance without struggling in the later parts of the run. These are especially important as you are building your base during the first and middle stages of the season.

HILLS

- Hills will become your friends, as most courses you race on will have hills in them. They may range from short, steep (50-100m) ramps, to inclines which take several minutes to complete. They will help build your stamina and your mental toughness. You will learn to see them as opportunities to break your weaker opponents, instead of as obstacles.
- You may do hill workouts in different formats. On some training routes, you will simply incorporate hills into your run. On others, we will do hill repeats (ie: at Lee’s Corner). When we do **hill repeats**, you will start at the bottom of the hill, and run hard from the bottom to the top. It is, in some ways, speedwork in disguise. You are encouraged to pick a pace that you can sustain, and adapt your form to the steepness of the grade. You should lean slightly into the hill and drive with your knees, pumping your arms. You should strive to “bust over the top” of the hill, and go all the way through the line. Often times, when we do repeats, we will do a set of pushups at the top (extra strength work), before JOGGING (not walking) to the bottom, where you will start again.
- Sometimes, we will do **hill circuits**, where you will work the uphill, jogging the downhill, in a continuous run (for a set number of hills).

TEMPO

- A tempo run is done at roughly 80% of your race pace and done for an extended period or distance. You will strive to maintain an even or accelerating pace. A test for this is if you can answer a simple question with a short sentence, (ie: "I'm fine") you are probably going okay. If you are too much out of breath to answer a short question, you may be going too fast, and if you can carry on a conversation, you are not going hard enough.

Tempo runs are typically done for longer distances. They may be done in an interval format (ie: 3 x 5:00 tempo, 2:00 rest) or a longer format (20:00 tempo or 2 x 1.5 miles, 5:00 easy). While these should be hard, they should not produce a great amount of lactic acid and are reasonably easy from which to recover. They also simulate a race situation, as you will be keeping a steady effort for an extended period of time.

FARTLEK

- This is a Swedish word which means "speed play". A fartlek is a series of shorter, faster intervals, interspersed with short rest intervals. Intervals may range from :20-:30 seconds hard to as much as 4-5 minutes. Usually the rest between intervals will range from :30-2:00, depending upon the length of the interval. Each interval will be run hard, maybe even faster than race pace. You will learn to control your speed based upon the length of the interval.
- Fartleks may take on different formats. You may have a workout where you do a certain number of a standard length (ie: 8 x 2:00Hard, 1:00 Easy jog or 12 x 1:00H, 1:00E). You might have a workout where you run intervals at a descending pace (ie: 3 x (2:00H, 1:00E, 1:00 H, 1:00E, :30H, 1:00E). You may also do what are called pyramids, where you will start shorter work up to longer intervals, and then back down to shorter intervals (ie: 1:00H, 1:00E; 2:00H, 1:00E, 3:00H, 1:00E, 4:00H, 2:00E, 3:00H, 1:00E, 2:00H, 1:00E, 1:00H, 1:00E)
- The key to fartleks is that you are in constant motion, either going hard or jogging between intervals. The fun thing is that you can mix these up depending upon the part of the season, if you are trying to work on going hard for longer intervals or working on top-end speed. They are also be a nice way to break up a longer run (ie: by throwing in some short intervals: ie: 10 x :30H, :30E). Fartleks lend themselves to more creativity than track work.

TRACK

- We don't use the track very much in cross country, because most courses we race on are not flat, and we try to train to adapt to changing conditions. With that in mind, we will do some track work to build strength and speed, and to learn pace on measured distances. You will learn your pace as you gain more experience, and more fitness. Track work is typically done a bit faster, and require more recovery, due to a buildup of lactic acid.

Hopefully, this guide will help you get a basic understanding of what you are doing as you begin your cross country career. Remember, there are no short cuts, and every person's challenge is the same...to do your best every day and to try and improve on the day before. As you grow physically, hopefully your mental stamina will improve as well, and you will find it easier to get through your workouts.

When you look at your summer schedule, be advised that this is a suggested progression. If you are travelling and have to change a day, then do so. Please do your best though, to follow the progression of easy days vs. hard (tempo, hills, fartlek, etc), so that you will have time to recover properly, and avoid injury.

It is important to remember that while each of you will have to do the work, you do not have to do it alone. Your coaches encourage you to use your teammates to help you push through days when it might not be as easy for you, and you will also be there to return the favor. Cross country is very much a team sport, and our experience has always been that teams that train together (over the summer, on the weekends, etc), are those who succeed together.

We are all in this together and together we will triumph as ONE!

Have fun!

Coaches Gilchrist, Soljanyk & Ansari