ROAD RHYTHMS

To achieve peak condition for a particular race(s), it’s important to select your races well ahead in advance so that you can plan your training cycle carefully.

Our 12-week training schedule can be grouped into 3 main stages. Each stage has their unique emphases and objectives; however, there is overlap between stages. The stages build on top of each other such that mileage, strength and speedwork combine to produce a synergistic & multiplicative effect at just the right time.

- Stage 1: Base & Strength (Weeks 1-4)
- Stage 2: Strength & Speed (Weeks 5-10)
- Stage 3: Speed & Taper (Weeks 11-12)
Stage 1: Weeks 1-4 Base & Strength

There are two main aims in this stage:

1) Primary goal: Gradually build your aerobic endurance leading to physiological adaptations such as a more diverse capillary network, and increased myoglobin and mitochondrial content (see http://www.sweatelite.co/aerobic-running/ for more details).

2) Secondary goal: Start to strengthen the muscles in preparation for speed sessions ahead, without delving too much into sustained anaerobic energy systems.

Here, you will notice a greater proportion of steady/recovery/tempo/long runs compared to speed work. Also, the duration of these longer runs will increase progressively throughout the 3 weeks. Essentially, you’re ‘banking in’ more and more miles as the initial weeks pass by.
Tempo Runs

These sessions help to build your anaerobic (lactate) threshold which is super important for long-distance running at a fast pace.

Basically, this refers to the exercise intensity at which lactate blood levels begin to exponentially increase. This occurs when the pace is too fast such that the aerobic system can no longer keep up with the body’s rate of energy demand. Therefore, the anerobic system starts to kick in, leading to the exponential build of waste by-product.

Tempo runs are performed at a pace which is the ‘sweet spot’ between the aerobic/anaerobic transition points. It is difficult to talk and is generally at RPE 7. Doing this regularly will help the body to push that threshold further so you can run at your target 5k pace more ‘comfortably’.

These tempo runs alternate between continuous runs and repetitions each week. Take 2min standing recovery between the tempo reps. Ideal surfaces are flat trails or roads.

Fartleks

The Kenyans dominate these sessions. The sessions involve alternating between surges (fast runs) and floats (easy runs). This will develop your ability to discern between different paces which is important during speedwork, as well as having the discipline to run exactly at your target pace on race day.

At the elite level, the fast runs are treated more like an extended surge, while the easy runs more closely resemble a steady run.

Hill Repeats

Find a place where there is a consistently moderate incline which stretches out for at least 500m or so. Hard effort uphill, easy jog downhill.

In addition to its strength-related benefits, the hills also encourage correct running posture and form. Watch out for good technique including: head up, shoulders relaxed, hips up, knees up, running on the front half of your foot in
Speedwork: Glycolytic (lactic) Repetitions

The shorter, snappier and more intense cousin of intervals. This is designed to get your legs used to extreme fatigue from local (i.e. confined to the legs) acidosis. It is important not to exhaust this system on back-to-back days. Doing so will come the expense of significant aerobic capacity, as it may recruit destructive enzymes that can rupture your cell membranes resulting in protein leakage and capillary damage.

These sessions are often completed at 3k goal pace @ RPE 9-10.

Recovery Runs

Very easy running! Note that this is different to total rest*: easy running stimulates the gentle flow of blood toxins to the liver, eliminating the acidosis and restoring the body to ‘neutral’. Failure to remove any mounting and prolonged acidosis will otherwise damage your body’s enzymes, muscles and red blood cells.

(*Rest is also critical to your recovery and injury prevention efforts, so don't ignore rest days. Here muscles are repairing microtears and building them to be stronger – i.e. stress-induced regeneration.)

Strength Training

Here we are referring to functional strength training, instead of very heavy weight sessions. They include light weights and plyometric activities for the core and leg muscles. Aim for 2-3 sessions per week, building up the intensity and repetitions until weeks 8-10.

Coach Alberto Salazar and physical therapist David McHenry assigns 3 sessions per week to Oregon Project’s elite athletes including Mo Farah and Galen Rupp. These include medicine ball lunges, runner pulls, side planks, clamshells, mountain climbers, etc.

Elite members of the Melbourne Track Club perform strength training almost every day, including core stability which is performed over 2-4 times a week.