

Boost your run speed



To hit peak fitness come the 2013 race season involves a balancing act. Springtime is when you need to increase training stress for greater race speed, but not so haphazardly that you raise the spectre of injury.

Over the winter, we've espoused the benefits of training in zone one to boost your aerobic base. But if you continue to train at this intensity, you'll just become good at running relatively slowly. So now is the time to build speed on that aerobic foundation, which means not only extending session duration, but also integrating a number of high-intensity sessions.

Because of its weight-bearing nature, however, running is the most injury-prone discipline in triathlon. That's why we need to take extra care when raising the intensity...

WARNING SIGNS

The art of high-intensity running is to know what the key sessions are; when best to apply them; and the warning signs to look out for when you're close to a dangerous training overload.

That last factor is the result of not balancing the first two correctly. You see, your leg muscles and ankles go through an increased range of movement when you run faster or when ascending/descending hills, leading to greater stress on your limbs.

Repetition of this greater load can result in overuse and over-reaching injuries. We're talking severe muscle cramps or debilitating shin splints.

So what do you need to do each week? We'd recommend you maintain one long run session for a sound endurance base, but mix up your 'other' runs with your choice from the Key Workouts box, below. These sessions will power up your triathlon running, while the variety keeps things fresh. Finally, to lower the chances of injury, where possible we'd recommend running high-intensity sessions on softer terrain, such as a field or firm sand.

KEY WORKOUTS

SHORT ACCELERATIONS

Once warmed up, throw in 5-10sec increases in pace – but not maximal sprints – either with a set steady-state run period (2mins) or in a random pattern. Have no less than 2mins between the bursts of speed.

DOWNHILL HIGH CADENCE

30min run, using 10 x 8sec efforts with 2mins running in between, using subtle downhill inclines, either on a looped course or as a series of repeats. This trains the nervous system to fire at a higher rate, like higher cadence cycling, in order to improve leg speed.

HILL EFFORTS

40min run over a looped course that includes multiple 200m downhill fast-feet intervals. Easy jog recoveries back down the hill or a looped course is required here,

to give a 1-2min easy running recovery period. Running uphill increase the leg power at a relatively low impact. It will improve uphill running ability in races and raise your oxygen uptake.

QUALITY BRICKS

10min indoor cycle followed by a relaxed 5min run. Then intervals of 3 x (7min bike and 3min run efforts). Possibilities are almost endless when mixing two sports, but a simple series of bike and run efforts lets you play with pace and priority of effort.

TAKEAWAY TIPS

1. High-intensity run training is necessary. But find the right balance of intensity before you risk injury.
2. A variety of efforts and terrain can make the progressive spring stage fun.
3. Listen to your body and tweak both intensity and recovery to avoid injury.