



[COACH CULPEPPER]

Making the Most of Your Training Time

Prioritize your workouts so you can continue to improve.

BY ALAN CULPEPPER

AS WE NAVIGATE the winter months and begin to recover from the holiday season, the time we dedicate to training becomes more and more critical. Although exercising is important throughout the year, it is even more essential during the post-stress of the holidays and when the gray and gloomy weather is less than inspirational. A shift in thinking is important to ensure you are taking full advantage of the time you do have to train and are continuing to make working out a priority. Even with limited time to fully invest in your training, you can still see incremental improvements with the proper mindset and some maneuvering of your schedule here and there.

► USE YOUR TIME WISELY

With limitations created by weather and lack of daylight, you need to use what time you do have wisely in regard to how much time you have available during any given week and the type of workout you choose to do. When your time translates to, say, your hour-long lunch break or getting out in the wee hours of the early morning, then you need to think about your week as a whole and not just take it day by day. Prioritizing is paramount and below are a few things to consider as you think about planning your training.

► DON'T MAKE YOUR TRAINING AN ALL-OR-NOTHING CAMPAIGN.

It can be easy to slip into an that kind of mindset. As long as you are consistent, then your training clicks along, but once you are off the wagon it falls apart completely. Don't fall into this pattern. It is amazing how beneficial



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consistent training is to your development. One of the beauties of running is the cumulative effect of training. It is not just about a few good weeks here and there but months of consistency. Don't let missing a few days or even a week derail your commitment. Put it behind you, jump back in and you will quickly get back what you lost.

► **KEEP THE QUALITY HIGH.** When motivation or time is lacking, it can be very tempting to lean toward only running easy day after day. In the end, quality training and the inclusion of specific workouts in your routine will be the difference in your overall development. Even if you are not feeling overly inspired during the winter months, keep some quality workouts in your schedule and your motivation will come back around. Modifying the types of quality workouts you do is fine, but don't cut them out completely.

► **INCREASE YOUR DAILY PACE.** One great way to maximize your time is to increase the pace of your easy runs. It's a simple way to make some aerobic gains. This should be a process of gradually bringing

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the pace up over the course of several weeks. You will find that you can manage more than you think and your body and nervous system adapt to the most consistent stimulus. If you are accustomed to running 9-minute miles for your easy runs then you should consider increasing that to 8:50, then 8:40 and eventually get to 8:30 over the course of three weeks.

► **CUT BACK YOUR EASY-DAY MILE-AGE.** If you have to cut back on your training due to illness, travel, family or work obligations, then really do your best to only have this impact your volume on easy days—not your workouts. As mentioned, if you increase your day-to-day pace, then you can get a nice aerobic stimulus. This even pertains to a shorter run. Even a 20-minute run can be beneficial when coupled with a quicker pace. Remember, you can always revert to the 20-minute run if you are lacking on motivation or time. You will not only feel better that you got a run in, but you will have touched on your aerobic and muscular systems.

► **COMBINE WORKOUTS.** A great way to get in a quality session with limited time is to combine workouts. This can include tempo runs, shorter speed work, fartleks or even long runs. If you have more time one day during the week, that's a great opportunity to not just do a long, easy run but also to include some tempo work. Likewise, you can combine tempo runs with shorter, speedier repetitions to get more out of one workout. For example, you could do a 15- to 20-minute tempo run followed by four to eight 1-minute repeats at a faster pace. Another great way to get an added aerobic stimulus is by including some fartlek or tempo work into your usual weekend long run. These combination workouts help compensate for less weekly volume or if you are cutting back your mileage on easy days.

DID YOU KNOW? The U.S. Half Marathon Championships **take place on Jan. 19 in Houston** as part of Houston Marathon race weekend.