



Fine-Tune Your Performance

Make the most of your early fall races.

BY ALAN CULPEPPER

Although there is joy in the process of training, not to mention a variety of physical and emotional benefits, in the end the goal is to race well. Performing well at a particular event quantifies all the hard work and sacrifice that went into the preparation. Many of you have pushed through the heat and humidity of summer the past few months and now is the time to reap the benefits of all that hard work. You might be thinking about racing a few times before putting the finishing touches on your training for a half or full marathon later this fall. If so, here are a few tips to ensure that you maximize your efforts.

DON'T BE AFRAID TO REST

The biggest mistake I see runners make is they are afraid to rest. Rest is critical to being able to push hard on race day. Without proper rest, your legs will not have the pop necessary to realize your maximum potential on race day. It takes longer than you think to lose fitness, and therefore many runners are afraid to rest because they're worried about falling out of shape. As long as you have managed to train consistently over the past several months, then backing off your mileage and letting yourself rest

is essential. Rest is the primary component to peaking well for your goal race.

Many people hear the term "peak" and they really don't know what it entails. First, it requires rest. There are also physiological elements involved and workouts that help the body improve how you handle lactic acid, but more than anything else rest is the primary component.

Cutting back 25 percent of your total volume two weeks before your race and another 15 to 20 percent during race week is a good standard in terms of handling your mileage.

DON'T NEGLECT AEROBIC ELEMENTS

Although rest is critical, you can't just stop training altogether. When you're racing frequently you need to maintain the training elements that helped you get to that point. Although mileage, long runs and longer workouts should not be primary focus aspects, these elements should still be included in your training plan to a degree. If you intend on racing a handful of times over the course of a month or six weeks, a medium-long run that's 60 to 65 percent of your standard long run would be appropriate to include every 10 days. A tempo workout at half-marathon race effort could be incorporated into this run, or you can do it as a stand-alone workout once every 10 days or so.

Long, overly fatiguing workouts should be avoided, but touching on aerobic workouts is necessary. A moderate fartlek, controlled tempo workout and a medium-long run every 10 days are important to keeping aerobic enzymes at a high level. The key is doing just enough to get in some high-level aerobic work while not doing too much and undoing all the recovery. Psychologically, you will feel better knowing you did a solid workout, but at the same time you don't feel wiped from running an overly fatiguing workout. Fifteen to 20 minutes worth

of work at half-marathon race effort is a good target.

SHORTER AND QUICKER

Shorter and quicker is a good motto when thinking about training in the weeks immediately before a race. Since you're lowering your overall mileage, the length of your daily runs should be shorter. Since you are running shorter, however, you can run a touch quicker. Increasing the pace of your daily runs by 10 to 20 seconds per mile is fine. When you start to back off the volume, you should be feeling fresher and have a little more pop in your legs, so running a touch quicker should not be a struggle. Also, your workouts should be shorter and at a quicker pace. This does not mean going to the track and cranking out really fast 400-meter repeats. Include some shorter, speed-oriented workouts, don't run much quicker than your goal 5K pace. Instead of long, sustained efforts like 5-minute pushes or mile repeats, you can combine some elements of speed and endurance into the same workout.

SAMPLE WORKOUTS DURING THE TUNE-UP PHASE:

- 2 X 5:00 @ goal 10K pace (2:30-3:00 rest between reps), 6 X 1:00 @ goal 5K pace (1:30-1:40 rest between reps)
- 1 X 1 mile @ goal 10K pace (3:00-3:15 rest), 3 X ½ mile @ goal 5K pace (2:15-2:25 rest between reps)
- 2 X 3:00 @ goal 10K pace (2:30 rest between reps) 2 X 2:00 @ goal 5K pace (2:00 rest between reps) 4 X 1:00 @ goal 5K pace (1:15 rest between reps)
- 1 X 15:00 tempo run @ 1/2 marathon pace (6:00 rest), 6 X 1:00 @ goal 5K pace (1:45 rest between reps)
- 3-mile tempo run @ marathon pace (5:00 rest), 2 X ½ mile @ goal 5K pace (2:30 rest between reps)



Two-time U.S. Olympian ALAN CULPEPPER helps runners of all abilities via his website at culpeppercoaching.com.

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