



[COACH CULPEPPER]

SPEED MAINTENANCE

Don't lose basic speed when training for longer races.

BY ALAN CULPEPPER

MANY OF YOU ARE IN the midst of preparing for a half or full marathon this fall. Hopefully you have included some shorter speed workouts during the summer months to keep your speed in check, but if not, we will cover a variety of approaches that will either turn those systems back on or keep them in check. The goal of your training program as a whole is to continually touch on the various aspects of training stimuli throughout the year. What is constantly changing is how much of each stimulus to include in your training schedule at any given time.

Bob Kennedy, former 5,000-meter American record-holder and the first non-African to break 13 minutes for 5K, used to include fast quarter-mile repeats at his 1-mile race pace as part of his high-volume base training phase in the winter. The point is to highlight how speed is always something to include. Below we'll look at a few aspects to consider in order to touch on your speed, keep your mechanics in check and maintain speed in your training rotation.

First, let me say that the phrase "speed work" gets thrown around quite a bit and most people have a false understanding of what this should really look like. First and foremost, speed work is not all-out sprinting. Elite-level runners do include some very fast sprinting but for our purposes, "speed work" should be associated with distances ranging from 100 to 800 meters and paces ranging from 1-mile race pace (or effort) to 5K race pace (or effort).

SPEED WORK

During the bulk of your half or full marathon preparation, it is advisable to include a shorter "speed" workout that touches on 5K-type pace or effort once every 14 days. The goal is to keep your fast-twitch muscles firing and developed, increase your efficiency at a quicker pace and inject some work at a higher heart rate, which in turn helps continue your aerobic development. These should be quick and hard but not overboard—you should not have to bend over and grab your knees after each interval. Keeping this faster work in the program will allow for an adaptation to running quicker and help you to run more relaxed at half- or full-marathon pace. It will also continue to promote efficiency, which allows you to burn less fuel in the longer event.

HERE ARE A FEW SAMPLE WORKOUTS THAT COMPLEMENT A TRADITIONAL HALF- OR FULL-MARATHON PROGRAM:

- 8–15 x 1:00 on/1:30 off [5K race pace for the "on," easy jog for the "off"]
- 6–12 x 2:00 on/2:00 off [5K race pace for the "on," brisk jog for the "off"]
- 4–8 x half-mile w/2:00–2:30 recovery [5K race pace for the half-miles with a very easy jog between]
- 4 sets of 90-second/60-second/30-second repeats with 1:00 recovery between each repeat and 3:00 recovery between sets [start at 5K effort and get progressively quicker with each set]

HILLS

Hill repeats are another great tool for maintaining speed and improving your mechanics and power. Many people run on hilly routes almost daily, but what I'm discussing here are actual repeats up a hill: hard up and very easy back down. Uphill repeats are a simple way to address your speed without having to run fast on flat ground. The hill creates resistance, slows the cadence and minimizes the danger of feeling frantic. You have to be careful to manage the downhill recovery.

THESE SAMPLE WORKOUTS SHOULD BE PERFORMED ON A FAIRLY STEEP HILL OF ROUGHLY A 7 PERCENT GRADE:

- 8–16 x 45-second repeats
- 2–4 x 2:00 repeats and 4–8 x 1:00 repeats
- 4–6 x 2:00 repeats and 3–6 x 30-second repeats

DRILLS AND STRIDES

Drills have become much more commonplace than they were two decades ago. The key is doing enough to get the added benefit but not risk injury or cause unnecessary fatigue. A little goes a long way with drills. A short 12- to 15-minute routine that you can do two or three times can add great value.

Strides, or fast 80- to 120-meter accelerations, are also of great benefit if done correctly and not overemphasized. Four to eight strides should be done three to four times a week after easy runs. Take a complete recovery (1 to 2 minutes) between each. As you adapt to the quicker pace, strides can then be added to your warm-up for harder workouts.

SAMPLE DRILL ROUTINE (20–30 METERS FOR EACH DRILL):

Visit competitor.com/drills for demonstrations of each drill

- Forward Arm Circles with Light Skipping
- High Knees
- A Skips
- Two-Legged Hops (4 inches high)
- Butt Kicks
- Carioca
- Leg Rises With Clap Under the Leg
- Side Shuffle



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