

SUPPLEMENTING YOUR RUNNING WITH STRENGTH TRAINING

BY ALAN CULPEPPER



I feel fortunate to have very few regrets when looking back at my competitive running career. One area of regret, though, is supplemental strength training. I was swept up in the mentality that any extra energy should go toward more mileage and I lost sight of being a well-rounded athlete.

Injury prevention and added power—which translates to better speed and additional muscular endurance—are two of the key benefits of strength training. Here are two things to think about when making strength training a part of your overall routine.

INTEGRATION

Like many athletes, I failed at integrating strength training into an overall routine. I was unwilling to compromise my running in any way and simply tried to add strength work on top of everything I was already doing. This only brought frustration, not to mention added fatigue.

The most effective way to integrate strength training is by slightly altering your running routine. Two or three days a week—on either off days or recovery days—is the best approach even if this means cutting back some of your running. Substituting 10–15 minutes of running with a 25–35-minute strength routine is a good approach. Build the strength workout into your training plan from the onset and make slight adjustments to your running so that you can effectively integrate this important element.

THE KEY WORD: SUPPLEMENT

The most important thing to remember with any sort of cross-training is to supplement and benefit your running—not take away from it. The great thing about strength work is that a little goes a long way. Strength work isn't a replacement for running but rather an addition to the training already being done (just in a slightly modified way). Don't just add more on top of what you are doing; rather, make slight adjustments and fold the strength training into your weekly routine.

It will take some time for your body to adapt both physically and mentally to the new stimulus, but you will be surprised at how much better you begin to feel even after just a few weeks. Be mindful of intensity: Remember, the key word is “supplement.” Strength workouts should be moderate intensity, or just enough to get the desired adaptation. They should not hinder your next running session.



Two-time U.S. Olympian Alan Culpepper won national titles from the 5K to the marathon. His first book, “Run Like a Champion,” is available at VeloPress.com.