

## WHAT I LEARNED FROM COACH MARK WETMORE

My college coach, Mark Wetmore, will go down as one of the most successful distance running coaches of all time. Since taking over as the head track and cross-country coach at the University of Colorado in 1995, he has produced almost 250 All-American runners, 22 individual NCAA champions, 29 conference team titles and seven national championship teams in cross country. He has also guided 11 Olympians during his 23-year career. He came to CU at a pivotal time in my running career and working with him proved to be a big turning point for me.

Mark taught us many invaluable lessons related to the physiology of training, the psychology of running and simply the ability to train hard. However, my largest takeaway from Mark was the importance of the long run. These are the key lessons to remember when working on your long run:

### GRADUALLY BUILD UP YOUR DISTANCE.

The long run should not comprise more than 35 percent of your total weekly volume. Build into it gradually and allow your body to adapt to the longer distance before adding more mileage. A safe amount to increase by each week is 20 percent once you have adapted to a given distance.

### CONSIDER PACE AND EFFORT.

Along with the distance run, your effort is also important. A good rule of thumb is making your long run 15 to 30 seconds per mile faster than your normal easy-day pace. Caution: Don't fall prey to running your long run at goal race pace. It shouldn't be easy, but it shouldn't be a simulated race effort either.

### CONSISTENCY RULES.

The long run rewards those willing to put in the time and effort—not just for a few weeks, but over the course of several months. There is a reason most marathon training programs are 12 to 16 weeks long. This has to do with the benefits of having consistent long runs in your training schedule.

### THE LONG RUN IS ONLY ONE PIECE OF A COM- PREHENSIVE PLAN.

Although the long run is a significant element in a training program, it's not the only one. The distance you are training for affects the value of the long run. The longer the race, the more important the long run becomes. Still, be mindful of the place it holds. Don't forget your tempo runs, lactate threshold workouts, speed work and hills.



Two-time U.S. Olympian Alan Culpepper won national titles from the 5K to the marathon. He coaches a wide range of runners through [Culpeppercoaching.com](http://Culpeppercoaching.com).

