

Strider Smarts presented by Coach Bob

Do What You Hate

An odd title for an article, but when it comes to training, it applies very well.

On your training runs, if you enjoy running at a leisurely pace, that's what you will run most often. If you like to challenge yourself each run or always run hard, you will. This is especially evident on the track, where most runners I coach love 200's and dislike mile repeats, and it's the ones they don't like that they need to practice.



I get it. 200's are pure speed, are over quickly and make you feel like you've completed a tough workout, which you have. But, and there's always a but, you need a variety of workouts to run your best. I have always thought 400's are the basis for any track program. You can still run them hard, and that will teach you pacing, or you will burn out early, like so many do in races. Also, if you vary the recovery interval, it makes for a completely different workout, like a 200 recovery instead of a 400.

800's are also a great workout, forcing you to respect your pace or bad things can happen. They are necessary for the 5K through marathon, and like the 400's, 3 miles of speed are ideal, but only after a few months adapting to the track. Yes, many dislike 800's because they are tough, and require concentration, stamina and patience, but they are worth it.

Now when we come to mile repeats, nobody likes them. Run slightly below 5K pace, they take time and preparation to master, as you do not want to interrupt the workout. Again, a necessary evil for any race distance.

I also like to throw in a variety of ladders, where you run some repeats of various distances. 4 x 400, 2 x 800, and 4 x 400 is one, and 4 x 200, 4 x 400, 4 x 200 is another I use, and also a combination of others. This teaches proper pacing. If you visualize a ladder, you run up it then pick up the pace running down, always finishing strong. These ladders combine the best of all the above, and I find my clients accept these better than the dreaded mile repeats. Being in So. Fl. also requires me to modify the workouts when it is 80 degrees and humid, so the longer intervals are best to run in the winter, and that happens to coincide with our racing season, so that works!

The point of this article is not to design workouts for you, but to show that a variety of runs will make you faster, stronger, more efficient and a better racer. Try changing your standard weekly runs by mixing it up, [slow down or pick it up slightly]. Hit the track and ask yourself "what don't I want to run" then run it. Yes, I'll hear you cursing me on the track, but come race day, I'll hear you cursing me again, except you will have run a great race!

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