WARNING : This post is suitable for all level of runners BEARING in mind that this is not a *'Touch 'n' go'* post; Do take time to read what I have to share with you runners . To beginner runners or even experienced runners who are unfamiliar with certain technical running/training terms, I've linked some terms in this post to related articles from Runner's World (well mostly). Just don't get carried away clicking on all the links at one go because the linked articles will take another breather to read them ! The points I got for the 6 common training mistakes is from Peak Performance. Feel free to comment and share some feed backs withmissjewelz after reading this article. Last but not least, be prepared to view some hot *flamenco* dancer photos which I posted along with this article, which is not actually related to the content of this article. But anyways, enjoy!

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The 6 Most Common Training Mistakes

1. Carrying out three long runs during the four-week period before race day

2. Carrying out just one workout per week at faster than goal marathon pace

3. Failing to complete any neural training, i. e., failing to train at VO2max speed (i. e., vVO2max) and omitting 'super sets' from the overall programme

4. Emphasizing non-running-specific strength training

5. Using gels during the marathon itself. (since exactly the right amount of water must be taken in with each packet of gel)

6. Employing a training programme which is devoid of variety (look up cross-training!)


RedPenelope : Numero Uno

Mistake numero UNO

Carrying out three long runs during the four-week period before race day - a 13-miler (1 mile= 1.609km) our weeks before the race, a 21-miler three weeks before the marathon, and a 14-miler two weeks in advance of the big day (we might also count the nine-miler at race pace one week before the marathon, which would give us four long runs in the pre-race month). For a runner with average leg strength, it takes at least a month to recover from strenuous marathon training so that the race itself can be completed with rested, healthy leg muscles; scientific research suggests that during this month before the race no workout should cover more than about 10 miles. This principle was violated three different times by the runner above, and as a result his quads were not really ready to race on marathon day - they were still reeling from the punishing training which had been conducted.

Proper strategy: to promote better recovery while still enhancing the ability to run marathon-type distances, carry out a long run every two to three weeks (not every week), gradually increasing the duration of this effort to 22 miles, only 10 to 12 of which are covered at race pace; on alternate weeks, complete shorter-duration quality training. Complete the last long run at least four weeks prior to race day.

Paco Pena : Numero Dos

Mistake numero DOS

Carrying out just one workout per week at faster than goal marathon pace. For endurance runners in general, max running speed is a good predictor of marathon potential, and for individual runners improvements in max running speed almost always lead to upgrades in marathon performance. It is difficult, however, to enhance max speed when only one 'speed' session is completed per week, especially when that 'speed' session is more of a tempo run than a higher-intensity effort.

Proper strategy: complete at least two faster-than-marathon-pace workouts per week, mixing interval workouts at 10-K, 5-K, and 3-K pace with neural training (see Mistake no. 3) and placing less emphasis on tempo runs.

Ayyayaaa.. (love the colours) : Numero Tres

Mistake numero tres

Failing to complete any neural training, i. e., failing to train at VO2max speed (i. e., vVO2max) and omitting 'super sets' from the overall programme. It is certain that vVO2max workouts produce more gains in vVO2max, lactate threshold, and running economy than any other type of training session; these three physiological variables are great predictors of marathon success. It is likely that super sets have a similarly strong physiological effect.

Proper strategy: carry out a neural workout every 10 to 15 days during the early stages of marathon training - and every week during the last eight weeks before a marathon.

Roses in the garden : Numero Cuatro

Mistake numero CUATRO

Emphasizing non-running-specific strength training. For the first four months of the pre-marathon training period, this runner emphasized strengthening exercises which involved isolation of particular muscles or muscle groups and seated or lying-down postures. These kinds of exercises are likely to have only a small (or no) impact on actual running strength (i. e., the ability to consistently take longer strides and the ability to be more stable and economical when the foot is on the ground during the stance phase of the gait cycle; if you doubt this, read Owen Anderson's piece on one-leg exercises earlier in this issue).

Proper strategy: start preparations for a marathon with six weeks or so of whole-body strengthening, with an emphasis on exercises which involve most of the muscles in the body simultaneously and which avoid seated and reclining postures. Then move on to hill training and exercises which duplicate key aspects of the gait cycle, including one-leg squats, high-bench step-ups, one-leg hops in place, bicycle leg swings, reverse bicycle leg swings, eccentric reaches with toes, and arrested step-downs, focusing on weight-bearing exercises which require high degrees of coordination and must be carried out with full body weight supported by one leg at a time. Finally, finish with about eight weeks of explosive work, including hops, bounds, sprints, one-leg squats with lateral hops, in-place accelerations, Indian hops, drop jumps, and high-knee explosions. These moves enhance the ability to run fast, and as max running speed increases, it drags marathon pace along with it.

Cinco, cinco, cinco ci : Numero cinco

Mistake numero CINCO

Using gels during the marathon itself. This is very tricky business, since exactly the right amount of water must be taken in with each packet of gel. Take in too much water - and you end up with a hypotonic sports drink in your gullet which delivers too few carbs to your leg muscles. Take in too little water - and you concoct a syrupy goo within your intestines which actually drags in water from surrounding tissues and spurs diarrhoea. Pour sports drink down your throat along with the gel, and you might as well begin scouting around for a Portaloo.(portable/mobile loo)

Proper strategy: it is possible to use gels during the race, but you'd better have a sports-drinks expert or exercise physiologist calculate your water intake for you. It's far easier to simply use sports drink throughout the race (remember never to mix sports drink with water), a practice which will increase your chances of avoiding GI upsets and delivering enough carbohydrate to your muscles.

Vote for Spain : Numero Seis

Mistake numero SEIS

Employing a training programme which is devoid of variety. Note that although our marathon runner attempted to make the overall training schedule progressive by broadening the duration of the cross-training (aqua jogging, stair-machine, and bicycle) workouts, the easy runs on Monday and Thursday, and the Saturday long run, the programme is monotonously similar from week to week. Although the workouts get longer, the types of training sessions utilized do not change.

Proper strategy: avoid a too-heavy dependence on tempo and long running, substituting an array of higher-quality workouts, including neural sessions (see Mistake numero tres), lactate-stacker workouts (two-minute intervals at close to max pace, separated by four-minute recoveries), hill climbs, fartlek efforts, speed-strength circuits, 800-metre intervals at 3-K pace, 1200- to 1600-metre intervals at 5-K speed, 2000- to 2400-metre reps at 10-K pace, and competitions ranging in distance from 5K up to the half-marathon. These kinds of exertions will have a much broader - and larger - impact on the key physiological variables which are important for endurance-running success, including vVO2max, lactate-threshold running speed, and running economy. They will also promote the ability to run faster, which is critically important for all types of racing.

No flamenco : Final punto !

Final PUNTO (points in Spanish!!)

Completing our analysis, it's important to bear in mind that aqua jogging does not remove lactic acid from the leg muscles (see Sunday's workout above); in fact, if the aqua jogging is above a fairly minimal intensity, it will actually increase muscle lactic-acid concentrations. In truth, there's no need to fret about lactic-acid levels in the muscles. Most of the stuff is removed or metabolized within minutes after a workout is over, and of course lactic acid does not cause muscle soreness or stiffness.

Note, too, that this runner can run much faster than 4:08 - or even 3:57 - for the marathon. If he can complete 18-mile runs at 8:20 pace relatively early in the overall preparatory period (as indicated in his letter), then the range of paces between 8:00 and 8:20 - not 8:57 - can be utilized to select a reasonable goal velocity, depending on how aggressive one wants to be at goal setting. An 8:20 pace would of course produce about a 3:38 marathon - and automatic qualification for Boston for this runner. That can happen without problem, as long as he doesn't get burned out during training.

Remember that it is your overall fitness which will determine your success at marathon racing, not the quantity of miles in your training log or even the number of long runs which you have completed. In fact, too many training-log miles will make your legs feel like logs on race day. The idea in marathon training is to 'peak' in neural and physiological fitness and in the ability to run long at goal marathon speed about a month before the race - and then to reach an even higher 'peak' in marathon capacity over the last four weeks by combining less total running and greater rest with the right amount of intense - but not prolonged - training. If you can pull that off, while retaining your confidence, you will have the greatest chance of running your best-possible race.