

PRESS ON AND RUN THE RACE!

[BY : SARAH STEWART BS, NASM]

The time is 8 a.m. The sun has already peaked out, as has your adrenaline. You look around at the many people, some who look average, some who you might be able to beat, and then those who look quite intimidating. You gaze forward again, preparing mentally for what is about to take place. You are in the race! Time in the gym, time spent eating properly, having completely stopped drinking beer—even on weekends—it all seems worth it now. The excitement of overcoming mental obstacles, physical barriers, and various emotional hurdles, floods your veins and seeps out of your skin with each heartbeat. You are in a zone you have never been in—or if you have, it feels like forever ago. The starting gun sounds and there you go, off to win “your” race!

As a Fitness Specialist, I train most of my clients to be strong, healthy, fight disease, prevent injury, and to have fun pushing themselves when the time is right. When most of my clients start working out on a regular basis, they don't imagine themselves performing in a race or even having the desire. Ultimately, however, as energy heightens, skills are enhanced, and previously inaccessible activities become more of an option physically, the mind prepares to help the body find out what it is capable of; think survival of the fittest.

My goal in this article is to introduce you to a pleasure many of my clients have discovered recently—racing. Racing enhances my clients' excitability toward goals for weight-loss, strength gains, and just pure fitness and health. Thinking about racing allows them to use their minds in a completely different way when it comes to stepping into the gym every day. They are challenged by the variety of skills they must develop and the organized way in which they are active, consume calories, and rest. As goal setters, format is what we all need. It's a program for life, if you will. Becoming familiar with and enhancing your mental, physical, and emotional components is key to meeting and exceeding goals. When people compete, they are not just challenging their bodies—they are challenging their overall capabilities, as well. Not too many people want to fail. Some people are less occupied with winning gold than others are, but the desire to strive for our personal best is in all of us. That is why racing adds a completely new and exciting dimension to your fitness regime and your fitness level.

INCORPORATING RACING INTO YOUR WORKOUT PLAN

Incorporating racing into your yearly workout plan does take a bit of extra planning and organization. First, you must be aware of what you are currently doing everyday when it comes to eating, working out, resting, and thinking. (My follow-up article—“Creating a Highly Efficient Fuel Burning System”—will address this and will be available in the next issue of NSIDE Magazine which comes out in January, 2006.) Second, you should determine what type of races you want to get into. Selecting races that match your interests, temperament, and skill level will greatly increase your enjoyment. Choose races based on these factors, and also the answers to the following revealing questions:

1. **ENJOYMENT:** What do I do when I workout and in what areas would I enjoy pushing myself?
2. **SKILLS:** So far, what skills have I accumulated in my life, and what new skills do I need to learn?
3. **TIME:** What activities am I willing to devote time to and how much time per day?
4. **FREQUENCY:** How often will I be working out? What is my daily schedule of other responsibilities and where are these training sessions, skill development sessions, and organized plans going to fit in?
5. **MODALITIES:** Do I need any extra equipment? What can I borrow and what will I need to purchase? (Swim memberships, bike, special shoes, etc.)

Once you determine what type of race and which specific events excite you, it is time to strategize! Strategic planning, specific planning, variation, progression, and individualization are some key components when you want to do your best without wasting time. Strategic planning refers to developing a progressive plan for your workouts and calorie consumption.

With strategic planning, you are acutely aware of time. Individual weeks are referred to as micro-cycles, while groups of weeks and even months are combined into meso-cycles, and the years

accumulate as macro-cycles. Typically, micro-cycles are one-week long, meso-cycles range from four to twelve weeks, and macro-cycles are approximately one year in duration.

Each meso-cycle should reflect a change in increments of intensity, and a change in tempo, from what the previous meso-cycle allowed. This creates an overload effect, therefore physiologically, mentally, and physically adapting the body to resist the fatigue that happens throughout a race! As the race approaches, the body should head into higher and higher intensities, progressively, until about two weeks before the race, where you should peak. Most people are not familiar with the steps that allow the body to perform optimally at the right time, but a little effort in understanding these concepts will allow a greater perception of how to handle the intensities of a race. The end-result will greatly exceed the effort required in planning, plus, getting to know your capabilities in anything you do should be fun!

Remember these steps in planning your meso-cycles:

1. **STRATEGIZE:** Plan each day and each meal so all you have to do is follow through.
2. **BE SPECIFIC:** Make sure your workout is not someone else's and that if running is your weak point, you work at running, not the elliptical trainer.
3. **VARY IT UP:** Make sure that you aren't doing the same workout day in and day out, but each workout should have some consistent progression.
4. **INDIVIDUALIZE YOUR PLAN:** Find out what your max heart rate, Vo2 max, RMR, and body fat are before starting. Take repeated measurements every six weeks to three months to recognize how your body is adapting.
5. **PROGRESS:** Make sure to take progressive steps according to how you feel mentally, physically, and emotionally, and adjust the intensity accordingly.
6. **OVERLOAD:** Each week should be ten percent more than the previous week, so over a month, you should see a 40-50% increase in specific areas of your skills and development.

SPECIFICITY AND INTENSITY The next step in designing a training plan for a race is creating even more specificity to enhance your capability and reach your goals. You do this by planning how often you will be working out per week, at what times you will be training during the day, and at what intensities.

How much intensity you start at depends on what your current fitness level is. To find out more about that, contact Pure Austin Fitness at (512) 474-1800. A Fitness Specialist can conduct a Vo2 max test or a submaximal test that will assess the volume of oxygen consumption by your body, per kilogram, per minute. This gives you an in-depth view of how well your body works under stress. By learning what your maximal heart rate, anaerobic threshold, and R.E.R (respiratory exchange rate) is, you will see that working out according to your heart rate is so much more efficient and accurate than guessing and randomly training. If you aren't interested in taking a test, doing some assessments on your own should be a priority. Make sure you know what your starting fitness level is. Not knowing could result in bio-mechanical imbalances that lead to injury. The last thing you need is something diminishing your enjoyment level, because enjoyment is a primary component in any workout or race training plan.

NUTRITION Nutritional planning can be just as progressive, specific, and individualized as the training plan for a race. The space restraints of this article will not allow for much detail, but I would like to give you a general idea for your goal setting. First, you need to start logging what you eat and when you eat it. This log will give you an idea of where to start making changes in order to create the desired effects in fuel utilization.

The type of fuel you use for training depends on your heart rate and what rate your body is using oxygen. The chart below depicts a 130-pound woman's energy consumption through two different intensities. As you can see, by engaging in less intensity, she is burning a higher percentage of calories from fat. The higher intensity performance slows her body to reach for a more immediate source—carbohydrates. Athletes, gym-goers, weekend warriors, and active people need nutrient-dense carbohydrates in order to perform optimally. If the fuel source is not abundant enough, higher intensities cannot be reached and the workouts get weaker instead of stronger, as does the motivation to push capabilities. In order to see a great deal of change in your body's performance and an adaptation of constant energy levels, you should read up on a few books that enhance your understanding of how your body operates on different types and quantities of foods. One source I direct people to is The Ultimate Sports Nutrition Handbook by Ellen Coleman. She is a renowned author and mentor to many high-level athletes.

energy consumed	walking (fat burning zone)	running (higher intensity)
Percent from fat	40%	25%
Calories from fat	52 calories	107 calories
Percent from carbohydrate	60%	75%
Calories from carbohydrate	78 calories	323 calories
Total calories	130 calories	430 calories

As you see, once you are pushing your body into higher intensities, you will need to eat a little differently. You will need more calories overall and a different ratio of macronutrients (carbohydrate, protein, and fat) to micronutrients (vitamins and minerals). You may also have to increase your micronutrient intake in order to make steady progress throughout your training. See a professional in the field for a guided program for any goal you have, but especially racing.

There are many ways to incorporate racing into your yearly workout program. By considering the factors mentioned in this article, you will have a foundation to work on. My desire is that this article will help catapult you into a new dimension of motivation and excitement for reaching and exceeding goals! Your cognitive abilities as well as performance capabilities will be enhanced by each workout, recovery day, and yes, by the mistakes in judgment you may make every now and then.

Fully grasping the steps to designing your own training program takes a bit of education first. Either read articles from a trusted source about your event or sport, or hire a personal trainer or coach for a specific plan. By learning about your training, eating, rest and recovery, and some of the principles for actually beating your goal, you will succeed and enhance your performance for future races. **N**

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websites & calculators for estimating & assessing:

- www.download.com/3120-20-0.html?qt=training+log&tg=dl-2001
- www.runnersweb.com/running.html

sources to use for training & nutritional planing:

- Ellen Coleman
- Nancy Clark
- A registered dietician or specialist in performance nutrition
- A qualified exercise physiologist or specialist for testing and program design development

pure austin fitness:

- Vo2 Max Testing
- Submaximal Testing
- Resting Metabolic Rate Testing
- Nutritional and Performance Guidance

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