

Planning and Organizing Track Programs and Workouts

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Designing and Planning Your Program

To have a successful track program, track coaches have to be great sales people. Let's face it; our sport is on the tail end of the athletic year for most athletes. Most of our athletes have participated in football, volleyball, basketball, or soccer since the start of the school year and they are tired and ready for something different when they come to us.

This is a great challenge for the track coach. Team sports are very demanding on athletes, not leaving much free time for these athletes during the year. That's when your sales job is most important.

You must sell yourself to the athletes. Caring, getting to know the athlete, their friends, family, just stuff about each one of them. We don't coach track. We coach people. They must see that you care about them as a person, not just as part of a team. This will make your program different and exciting to the tired athlete.

You must be organized. The athletes have put a lot of time in other sports during the year. You need to organize quick, effective, and fun workouts. Oftentimes, you are expected to work around off-season workouts. You do this by being organized. Have a plan and stick to it. Let the athletes know the objective of your daily workout and how they are expected to achieve this objective.

You must have a plan. no matter when you start your track program, have a plan! All programs have a preseason, competitive season, championship season, and state-bound season (if you are lucky that is). The important thing in each of these training cycles is to have a **goal** in mind. What do you want to accomplish in each phase of the program? How long is each phase? Do some athletes miss phases due to other sports?

Track is measurable and so are workouts. Keep good records of your workouts as the season progresses. Build future workouts on past performances of your athletes. Be specific with each athlete's workouts. **Specificity of training** is the key to reaching your goals in meets. Don't train a half-miler with your sprinters.

Teach the pace to your athletes. How many times have you seen an athlete go out too fast or too slow. This is embarrassing to the athlete and hurts his self-confidence and pride in himself. Work on race pace in practice so the athlete will know how to race on Saturdays. Why should he always have to run someone else's race and try to beat them at the end? Teach pace every day and your athletes will have this race pace ingrained in their brains for race day. Once again, this refers to specificity of training.

For many years, beginning back in 1973, I began using the pacing method of coaching athletes. I have learned new tricks throughout these years, but basically the results are always the same. The athletes know how to race on Saturdays because they have trained using the same pace on Mondays and Wednesdays. Calculating these split times took a lot of my time, but if you believe in a system it will usually work for you.

My tools were a calculator, stopwatch, traffic cones, and a whistle. Eventually computers came around and I wrote a program to figure splits and print them out on a sheet of paper for me. That was about

1988. in the '93 season, my assistant coach, Phil Wiggins, and I wrote some software to design workouts and calculate training splits for any goal pace. This is what we use today to design all of our workouts every day for our athletes. All you need is a goal pace and the computer does the rest for any training distance.

Let's take a look at our workout plan at Lake Highlands and I'll talk more about the software later.

Workout Design

1. Stretching

- A. Hamstring and lower back (grab toes - straighten legs)
- B. Groin (butterfly)
- C. Hurdle stretch (foot inward)
- D. Shoulder stretch (2 man)
- E. Leg spread (touch toes straight legs)
- F. Roll overs and bicycle legs
- G. Hamstring (2 man)
- H. Quad stretch (pull foot to butt)
- I. Calf stretch (against wall or fence)

2. Drills

- A. Form run (alignment of toes, head, eyes, hands)
- B. Ankle flips
- C. Low butt kicks (fast turnover)
- D. High butt kicks
- E. 5x5 quick step
- F. Short skip
- G. Long skip
- H. Backwards kick (from hip)
- I. Machine gun (high knees)
- J. Buildups

3. Squad Meeting and stretch with Coach - Coach explains workout and objectives of training while athletes stretch. (Note: Post workouts in locker room so athletes know what equipment to bring to track each day such as spikes, jumping shoes, batons, etc.)

4. **Technique Work**

- A. Relays - mechanics and steps
- B. Hurdles - hurdle drills and pace work
- C. Jumps - jumping skills
- D. Throws - throwing drills

5. **Conditioning** in groups. (Assign one student timer to each group.)

- A. Sprinters
- B. 400
- C. 800
- D. Distance (this group is conditioning while the others are doing their technique work)
- E. Hurdlers

6. **Weights** Set up weight days for athletes. This is important to them and their other sport coaches. We use a program called Stiggins for this.

7. **Cool Down.** Jog and stretch until you feel somewhat recovered from the conditioning.

Pacing Method of Training

1. Divide your track into sectors. we use 10 forty meter (40m) sectors.
2. Determine your goal pace for the individual or group you are working with. Then start your workouts with approximately 70% intensity at the beginning of your preseason workouts. As your season progresses increase the intensity of the training runs until you are training a race pace. Here's an example workout:

Typical workout for a 400m runner (Goal time = 50.0)

Preseason

6 x 320m at 70% intensity (Restart at 10:00)

This workout means that a group of 400m runners would train at a distance of 320m with a training time of 52 seconds and start the next training run every 10:00, running a total of 6 training runs for the session.

The calculation for this training time is 320 meters is the 8th interval of a 400m dash. Your goal pace is 50 seconds for the end of the year so each interval of training is 5 seconds (50 seconds ÷ 10 splits) in duration. 8 x 5 seconds = 40 seconds. Then you are training at the beginning of the year so multiply 40 seconds x 1.3 and that yields a time of 52 seconds for the training run. Actually 70% of intensity equals 130% of a maximum effort run. Just as 80% equals 120% of a maximum training run, 90% equals 110%, etc.

Competitive

4 x 320m at 90% intensity (Restart - Full recovery)

This yields a training time of 44 seconds for 320m.

Championship

3 x 320m at 100% intensity (Restart = full recovery)

State Bound Athlete

2 x 320m at 100% intensity (Recovery = full recovery)

Note: A yearly goal faster than 50.0 might be appropriate to run in the state meet. You may need to adjust your goal for an athlete who achieves this plateau of competition.

**Notice that the volume of training runs decreases as the intensity increases. This is the movement from quantity to quality in your workouts.

Seasonal Plan

We start our preseason just like everyone else with lots of overdistance and steady state runs. We use a formula of 70% intensity of the athlete's goal for the year to start this cycle of training. Let's look at an example:

Athlete A wants to run a 2:00 for 800m by the end of the year. Starting your athlete at 70% maximum effort will safely train the athlete toward his goal at the end of the year. The chart below illustrates this principle with four different training distances.

Preseason — Competitive — Championship — State							
Distance	70%	75%	80%	85%	90%	95%	100%
800m	2:36	2:30	2:24	2:18	2:12	2:06	2:00
600m	1:57	1:53	1:48	1:43	1:39	1:35	1:30
400m	1:18	1:15	1:12	1:09	1:06	1:03	1:00
320m	1:02	1:00	0:58	0:55	0:53	0:50	0:48

Pacing Chart for an 800m runner with a goal time of 2:00.

Having well-defined goals is the key to planning these types of workouts. Goals are like road trips -- you need to know where you are going before you start driving. Here are some reasons why we use the pacing method with our athletes.

1. How many times have you designed a workout for runners with a good mixture of quantity and quality for your objective then see your athletes blow out the first rep trying to impress you and their teammates and everything is downhill from that point? Well cut your workout down and go to the house. Pacing doesn't allow this to happen. Your athletes are getting audible feedback with their pace every 40 to 80 meters during their training runs.

2. How many times have you designed a workout for close to maximum effort for 2, maybe 3, training runs and your athlete goes out too slow and you ask them to repeat the effort for their first run? This sets the attitude and tempo for the rest of the day. Crummy! Pacing doesn't allow this to happen.

3. If your athletes don't learn race pace in practice, they won't be prepared on Saturday. Training against a pace builds confidence. You can simulate race conditions for your runners. Teach them how fast to run the first turn of an 800m race. Show them how fast to run the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd intermediate hurdles. All these things can be done with pacing.

Conclusion

A successful track and field workout is a beautiful thing to watch. Most of us have been part of an 8 to 10 man football staff with 60 to 70 athletes to workout. It's a whole different challenge working with 16 different events, sometimes boys and girls together, with one or two assistants. we take great pride in our organizational skills and the ability to coach boys and girls at the same time with three coaches at Lake Highlands.

We feel our athletes appreciate coming out to a workout that flows from one phase to another in an orderly fashion. As I said before, these guys have paid some dues in other sports, put in many long hours, and need some time for themselves to just relax. That makes organization a must for these athletes.