

Ask the Coaches: Workouts for Sprinters

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Q: I am an assistant middle school girls track coach. The head coach has limited running experience. I am a lifelong runner, age 47. I'm trying to give advice without overstepping my boundaries. Could you give some advice on workouts for 100, 200, 400 meters for girls ages 12-14 that I could share with the head coach. I would very much appreciate it.

A: Dear Coach,
I'm just an old broken down middle and long distance coach so I can't answer your question very well. However, here are a few general suggestions:

To develop leg speed:

Run a few, all-out, full speed sprints for 50 meters with a flying start. Rest at least 2:00 between these few (6-8 x 50 m) repeats. By just running a short distance, the sprinters will not risk pulling muscles due to lactic acid buildup. The sprint is too short for heavy oxygen debt to occur. The long rests allow any lactic acid that does build up from the oxygen debt to dissipate.

To develop lactic acid tolerance:

Run several x 300 meters by covering the 1st 200 m at slightly slower than 400 m race pace, then kicking as hard and fast as possible over the last 100m. The split for that 100 should be a couple of sec faster than the pace over the 200. Take a real long rest of 3-4:00 to recover.

For speed endurance:

Run lots (15-20) of repeat 100's at PR pace plus 2 or 3 seconds with 100 m JOG recovery.

Each of these workouts is a separate day's work and are not to be combined with each other.

The sprinters could run some other things like starts or handoffs, but since each workout has its own bio-mechanical, physiological or biochemical objective, they should be done on different days so the workouts aren't counterproductive and wind up tearing down, instead of building up, the athletes.

Hope this is of some small value. If I coached sprinters, I'd have them come to practice, touch their toes and then take a shower. But at meets they would do all the sprints, jumps, hurdles, and relays that the rules allow. It's called "racing them into shape." I'd do that because I really have never coached sprinters and really wouldn't know what I'm doing.

Yards of :-)'s,
Coach Benson