

Planning the Training

The purpose of a Training Plan is to identify the work to be carried out to achieve agreed objectives. Training Plans should be drawn up to identify long term (4 years) objectives as well as short term plans for the forth coming season. For the rest of this topic I will concentrate on the development of the short term annual Training Plan. In its simplest form the plan could comprise of a single, A4 sheet identifying the overall plan for the year, and more detailed weekly plans identifying the specific activities the athlete is to carry out.

Training year

The start of the training year will depend upon the athlete's circumstances and objectives, but this would generally be around October for track and field athletics.

Information Gathering

The first stage of preparing a Training Plan is to gather background information about your athlete and the objectives for the forth coming season. The sort of information to collect is as follows:

- Personal details
- Name, address, date of birth, telephone numbers, transport arrangements
- Objectives
- Performance (time, height, distance)
- Technical (development of event technique)
- Indoor and/or outdoor season
- Experience
- Personal best (PB's)
- Competition experience (club, county, national, country)
- Equipment
 - Does the athlete have his own equipment (e.g. starting blocks, javelin etc.)?
 - Harness and tire
 - Elastic harness
 - Weight jackets
 - Video camera
 - Distance, time, % effort matrix chart
- Finance
 - Where can grants be obtained from?
- Competition
 - Date of main competition
 - National and Area Championships
 - School , University competitions
 - Required qualification times for competitions
- Fixture lists - Club, County etc.
- Open Meetings

- Competitors
 - Who are the competition and what are their PB's?
- Recent competition results
- Competition behavior
- Athlete's other Commitments
 - School, college, work, part time jobs
 - Family and partner
 - Hobbies and other sports
- Time available for training
- Planned holidays
- Medical
 - Previous injuries or illness
 - Current problems (diabetes, asthma etc.)
 - Access to medical support
 - Physiotherapy support
 - On any medication - is it a banned substance?
 - Using asthma inhaler - application to use Beta 2 agent inhalers
- Training facilities
 - Tracks and other running facilities (bad weather)
 - Gymnasiums and weight training
 - Swimming pools, saunas and massage
- Coaching Workshops
- Last season
 - What can be learnt from last season - good and bad aspects
- Key questions for the athlete
 - How serious are you about your athletics?
 - What do expect from your coach?

Analysis of the last program

If this is not the first program you have generated with the athlete then an important activity to conduct is a SWOT analysis of the last training program:

- Strengths
 - What were the best aspects of the program and why?
 - What did we do well and why?
- Weaknesses
 - Are there gaps in the program?
 - What did we not do very well and why?
- Opportunities
 - How can we enhance the program to the benefit of the athlete?
- Threats
 - What may prevent us achieving the short and long term objectives?

Periodisation

Periodisation is the method of organizing the training year into phases where each phase has its specific aims for the development of the athlete.

The phases of a training year

The training year is divided into 6 phases as follows:

- Phase 1 - 16 weeks - Oct, Nov, Dec, Jan
- Phase 2 - 8 weeks - Feb, Mar
- Phase 3 - 8 weeks - Apr, May
- Phase 4 - 8 weeks - Jun, Jul
- Phase 5 - 8 weeks - Jul, Aug
- Phase 6 - 4 weeks - Sep

This assumes that the competition climax will be in August

What if there is an indoor and an outdoor season?

For the athlete with competitive objectives for both the indoor and outdoor season then the phase allocation for the indoor season could be as follows:

- Phase 1 - 6 weeks - Oct, Nov
- Phase 2 - 8 weeks - Nov, Dec, Jan
- Phase 3 - 6 weeks - Jan, Feb

and the outdoor season as follows:

- Phase 1 - 4 weeks - Feb, Mar
- Phase 2 - 6 weeks - Mar, Apr
- Phase 3 - 5 weeks - Apr, May
- Phase 4 - 7 weeks - Jun, Jul
- Phase 5 - 6 weeks - Jul, Aug
- Phase 6 - 4 weeks - Sep

This assumes that the climax of the indoor season is in February and the outdoor season in August. Depending on your athlete's objectives and abilities, then the year start and duration of each phase may have to be adjusted to achieve appropriate development.

Objectives of each phase

The objectives of each phase are as follows:

- Phase 1 - General development of strength, mobility, endurance and basic technique
- Phase 2 - Development of specific fitness and advanced technical skills
- Phase 3 - Competition experience - achievement of indoor objectives
- Phase 4 - Adjustment of technical model, preparation for the main competition
- Phase 5 - Competition experience and achievement of outdoor objectives
- Phase 6 - Active recovery - planning preparation for next season

Activities of each Phase

The athlete's physical needs that require development are:

- Basic body **Conditioning**
- General and Specific **Strength**
- General and Specific **Technique**
- General and Specific **Mobility**
- General and Specific **Endurance**
- **Speed**

Each of these needs should be seen as a building block, where specific blocks need to be in place before you progress to the next. Failure to do this may result in **injury**. How you allocate the blocks to each phase depends upon the athlete's weaknesses and strengths and is for you as the coach to decide with the athlete.

One approach is to progress the building blocks as follows:

- basic body conditioning
- general strength, endurance, mobility and technique
- specific strength, endurance, mobility and technique
- speed

When progressing from one block to the next, remember to fade one out as the other comes in and not to switch from one block to the next overnight. Some blocks once started may continue to the end of the season but at a less intense level e.g. mobility. Other blocks to consider are **relaxation, visualization and psychology** (mental attitude).

Preparing a plan

The steps in producing a Training Plan are as follows:

- Gathering information
- Produce an overall plan template and identify the months/weeks of the year
- Identify on the plan at the appropriate period
 - the main competition
 - area, national, school etc. championships
 - qualification competitions
 - club fixture meetings

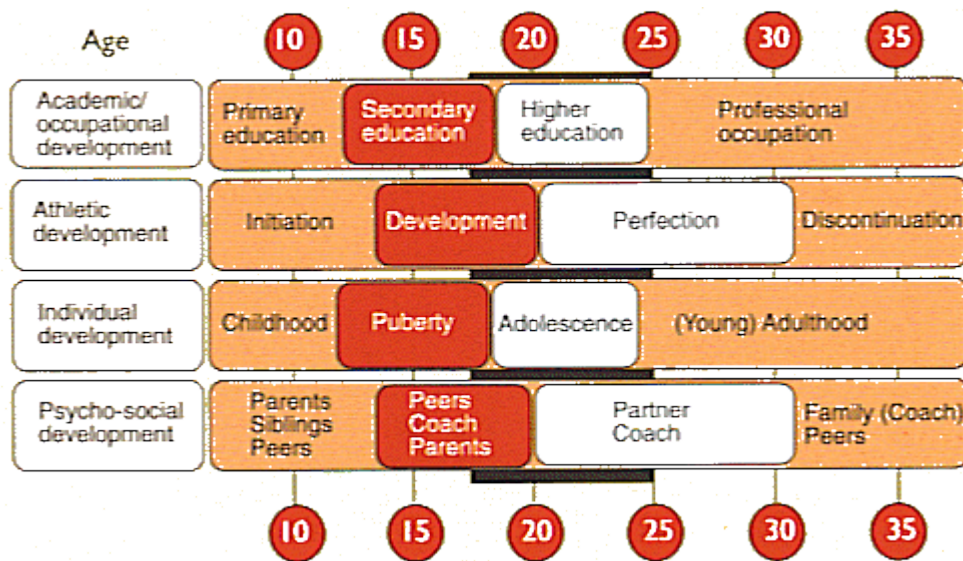
- the 6 phases based on the main competition in phase 5
- Identify on the plan
 - the blocks (e.g. strength, endurance) to be developed in each phase
 - the period of development for each block
 - the intensity of training week by week
 - number of training sessions per week
 - **evaluation** points to monitor progress
- Identify appropriate training units for each block as appropriate to the phase of development.
- Group the training units for each block into training schedules taking into consideration the number of training sessions the athlete can complete per week, the required training intensity and the phase of development.

Athlete Development

As an athlete matures, they are not only developing in terms of their sports but also in terms of education, career, physical maturity and their relationships with those around them. On average, an athlete is likely to face up to seven transitions during their full athletic and perhaps the critical transition occurs around the age of 20 when they may be:

- moving to university/college or commencing in full time employment
- progressing to a high performance level
- maturing through adolescence
- establishing relationships with a partner

Coaches must take into consideration these transitions when **planning** the annual and long term training programs for their athletes.



Athlete development model, P. Wylleman, 2004

What are a training unit and a training session?

A training unit is a single activity (e.g. 6 × 60 meters at 90% effort with 2 minutes recovery) with a set objective (e.g. develop specific endurance). A training session is made up of one or more training units e.g. **warm up** unit, **Technique drills** unit, Speed Endurance unit and a **cool down** unit.

What is a training schedule?

A training schedule (microcycle) comprises of a number of training units that can span from 7 to 30 days.

What are Microcycles, Mesocycles & Macrocycles

A microcycle, also known as a training schedule, is a group of training units. The mesocycle, also known as a macrocycle, is a number of repeats of a microcycle.

Goal Setting

Goal setting is a simple, yet often misused motivational technique that can provide some structure for your training and competition program. Goals give a focus, and there are two well known acronyms to guide goal setting.

SMART or SMARTER

- S - goals must be **Specific**
- M - training targets should be **Measurable**
- A - goals should be **Adjustable**
- R - goals must be **Realistic**
- T - training targets should be **Time based**
- E - goals should be challenging and **Exciting**
- R - goals should be **Recorded**

SCCAMP

- S - goals must be **Specific**
- C - within the **Control** of the athlete
- C - goals are **Challenging**
- A - goals must be **Attainable**
- M - training targets should be **Measurable**
- P - goals are **Personal**

FITT Principles

The basic principles of fitness training are summed up in the acronym F.I.T.T

- F - Frequency - how often
- I - Intensity - how hard
- T - Time - how long
- T - Type - the type of training (strength, endurance etc.)

Training ages

When developing a training program it is important, especially for young athletes, to take into consideration the athlete's:

- Chronological age - age from date of birth
- Development age - physical, mental and emotional development
- Training age - number of years they have been seriously training

[Long Term Athletic Development \(LTAD\)](#) is a sports development framework that matches training needs to an athlete's growth and development.