



Get Out of the Marathon Rut By Don Lucas

For most, completion of the marathon is a signature moment – exhilarating, relieved, exhausted, and fulfilled – a few of the varied emotions experienced by all who finish. However, the glow of marathon success diminishes with the passage of time and the reality of the next training or fitness activity becomes more of a concern. For some, maybe one marathon is enough – forever or at least for now! For most, one or two marathons a year is reasonable. Fortunately, there are many alternatives to running and training for marathons.

The most critical decision to be made following the marathon is the decision to continue your fitness program. That is usually a relatively easy decision because most of us like the way we feel when we are fit. Moreover, we don't want to lose the conditioning and training base that marathon training provides.

What are my choices? You certainly don't have to continue running marathon to maintain fitness. In fact, many alternatives to marathons and marathon training programs exist – almost all of which will be beneficial from a fitness perspective. More importantly, diversity in training and a variety of training activities over the course of time is highly motivational and frequently prevents excessive boredom. Routine and sameness in daily training lead to "plateauing" and loss of enthusiasm for your fitness activity. Not surprisingly, engagement in the other training activities and programs may enhance subsequent marathon performance as well as revitalize enthusiasm and commitment for marathon training. Think about these choices, if your running or fitness program could stand a shot of adrenaline or a change of pace.

Why not work on your foot speed and let turnover with a healthy dose of anaerobic work? Luke's Beat Spring programs are ideal for a great change of pace to marathon training. Moreover, the mileage base developed during marathon training is ideal for the strength and speed components of the Beat programs. The abundance of 5K and 10K spring time races provide the opportunity to compete regularly (motivational) as well as measure your seasonal progress by comparing your 5K and 10K times as the Beat program progresses. In order to run faster, you must practice running faster by conditioning your body and your mind to running faster. For example, if your goal is to run a 6 minute pace 5K (18:36), you must first run a 90 second 400 meters. Beat programs are all about increasing your foot speed and let turnover as well as learning how to better experience oxygen debt (anaerobic conditioning).

A second compelling alternative form of fitness activity involves more intensive multi-sport and/or cross training disciplines. There is little doubt that long-term cross training is generally more body friendly for most people and beneficial in achieving and maintaining all around fitness and enthusiasm for training. Moreover, the spring and summer months in Texas give us the opportunity to compete in a number of triathlons, duathlons, cycling events and adventure races thereby providing goals and targets for our multi-sport and cross training activities. At a minimum, some consideration should be given to adding regular directed strength training, stretching – including pilates and yoga, cycling and/or mountain and trail biking, walking and swimming as alternative and supplements to daily running. Luke's spring triathlon programs have been designed to assist both the beginner and the veteran multi-sport athlete in developing and enhancing cross training activities which can be integrated into daily routines to energize, stimulate and enhance training. Adventure racing is a fun demanding multisport activity which will

continue to increase in popularity as the fitness movement grows. Many runners find cycling training very compatible and stimulating.

Finally, a word about fitness walking and track workouts as training alternatives. Opposite forms of exercise to some extent, and perhaps better suited to targeted groups, but activities that should not be over-looked if you are searching for different forms of training activities which will stimulate and motivate you to continue regular exercise.

Fitness walking properly performed is a tremendous, body friendly, social, calorie consuming, cardiovascular enhancing activity. Many runners find fitness walking a welcome alternative to the pounding and stresses of daily running. To those who say that they cannot achieve the same cardiovascular benefit from fitness walking that they attain from running need to walk faster! Sub 14 minute per mile fitness walking and/or combination walk-runs will provide great cardio workouts.

Track workouts including participation in Luke's All-Comers summer track series in both Dallas and Fort Worth are great ways to find friendly competition, improve speed and add variety to your training routine. WE know from experience that many of the fastest runners in our area at distances from the 5K to the marathon are regular participants at our meets and integrate regular supervised and/or directed track workouts into their training routines. Many experienced road racers and aspiring fitness runners should explore track competition and workouts as a way of discovering a new interesting activity that will definitely and positively enhance their road racing ability.

Hopefully, one or more of the mentioned activities have peaked your interest. As our knowledge of fitness and physical fitness activities increase, we better understand the importance of enthusiasm for and commitment to that activity in achieving our fitness goals. Most of us need and want variety and diversity in our activities. Activities need to have some element of fun and personal satisfaction for us to continue to pursue them. If your personal physical fitness routine needs a jumpstart or is you sense that your training has become stale, try something new and different. There are plenty of choices out there, and Luke's can help find the right ones for you!