

RACING AND SPEEDWORK.

After months of hard distance and strength training, it is now time for speed work and fast racing! All phases of training are designed to help runners race faster, but actual speedwork allows runners to perform at their best.

SPEEDWORK.

Always prepare fully for interval training, or other forms of speed running. The base work and strength training should precede interval training for maximum benefit. So, follow these tips for successful, injury free speed training:

* Warm up and cool down correctly. This should include at least 15 minutes of easy jogging, followed by a complete stretching routine. Then run 4 to 6 x 100m fast, relaxed strides. Run the first two strides fairly easily, and then run each of the next strides faster, until the last one is close to a full sprint. If the temperature is below 80 degrees, wear warm up pants for this routine. At the end of the workout, get a drink of water, recover for 5 to 10 minutes, and then jog 15 minutes easy. Now do a few more minutes of light leg stretches.

* Try to understand the planned training for the day. In other words, be mentally ready for the training. This will help you do the workout correctly and get the maximum physiological benefit from the training session. Run the correct paces, and adhere **STRICTLY** to the rest periods between each interval.

* Use **lighter training shoes** for speedwork. These shoes will allow the muscles to "fire" faster, which puts less stress on the legs, as well as helping runners run faster. These can be light weight trainers, or racing flats. Consult your local LUKE'S store for more advice.

* Follow the weekly schedule! By skipping days, or adjusting the week, runners will be more susceptible to injury, and are likely to **not** meet their racing goals.

RACE PREPARATION.

* Training should be easier for at least two days before a race, to allow the body to fully recover, and be ready for a full effort on race day. Try to rest well the night before, eat lightly, and avoid coffee, tea, soft drinks and alcohol.

* Arrive at the race early (60 to 75 minutes); to allow time to park, warm up thoroughly, hit the restroom etc. This will also reduce the unneeded stress of rushing around prior to the race.

* Arrive at the venue dressed to race, with your number already pinned on. This will save time and eliminates one more thing to worry about.

* Do a normal warm up - something that you have done before (see above). This should be part of your routine by now. Time the warm up to end five minutes before start time. Get a small drink of water; go to the start line, then keeping moving around until the gun goes off. This will help the legs stay warmed up and ready to run fast.

* Pace the race correctly!! The interval training should give you an idea of how fast you can run - so run as close to that pace at the start. If you feel good after the first third of the race start to pick up the pace. Starting too fast **WILL** catch up, and force a much slower pace at the end. Pacing correctly leads to faster times! Each mile should be faster than the last.

* Always try to finish the last half mile, or so, strongly. If all the training has been done, you will have more speed at the end than you think you have.

* Cool down well - remember you have more training to do, and a proper cool down helps the body recover from the hard effort.

* Finally, review the race in your mind. Go over it critically, looking for mistakes and remembering the good things you did. Try to eliminate the mistakes, and build on the positives, in future races. This combination of hard well planned physical training, and mental involvement in training leads to ultimate success in racing.