

## **Interval training- Why it's good for runners**

If you're taking part in a Half Marathon or Marathon you will probably fall into one of three runner categories 1) Completing a distance running event for first time 2) Taking part for the experience and running at a pace which is not taxing or 3) Striving to achieve a personal best time.

For those striving to achieve a personal best time, not only do you have to train consistently in the lead up to race day, but you need to start alternating the types of sessions involved in your training. Continually training at the same pace will not make you a faster runner and this type of approach can eventually start to feel a tad monotonous. This is where interval training comes into play.

### **What is Interval Training?**

Interval training involves bursts of speed measured by distance (e.g. 500m) or by time (e.g. 1min) interspersed by rest periods which may be a standing recovery or a slow jog recovery. For example, 8 x 1min fast efforts with a 30 second jog recovery between each. Such intervals make up the "core" of a training session which will also involve an easy 15-20min warm up jog pre core training and a 15-20min cool down jog post core training.

These short and sharp efforts, whereby you run at a much faster pace than your goal race pace, will not only increase your ability to deliver oxygen to your working muscles but also increase your ability to keep that dreaded "lactic acid" at bay.

Adding variety to your training by changing up the type of sessions involved, such as incorporating speed and hills, will find you welcoming a tough session following a couple of easy days, and an easy day or two is a welcomed relief following a tough session.

### **How to Interval Train**

To run a great marathon you need to be in your best 10k/half marathon shape and to run a great half you need to be in your best 10k shape.

I'm a believer in the "Polarized Training Method". Such a method will find you running at a relaxed pace for 80% of your training volume with the remaining 20% looked upon as if there's no tomorrow

Interval training is a period of time requiring complete focus. When testing yourself in training, visualise yourself achieving your goal on race day.

When I was an elite athlete, a standard session would involve 10 x 1 minute efforts, with a 45-second jog recovery around an undulating course. The session would also involve a 20-minute warm-up and cool down. It would only take me an hour to complete this session but it was a true test as to how much I wanted to succeed. I ran every 1 minute effort close to my maximum potential, and would try to keep the recoveries moving along at a respectable pace. I would finish my 10th effort totally exhausted, knowing my last 15-20 minutes could not have been better spent in my quest to be the best I could be. On numerous occasions I would say to myself "OK, so how much do you really want this? Come on, another two efforts". Then off I would head for a further two heart-busting efforts.

My long run (2-3hrs) training pace was between 3.40 and 4min/km however my personal best Marathon "race pace" was 3.04/km. Race day was when I called on both facets of my preparation – slow 80% and fast 20%.

**Tip: Create short term goals**

Shorter races than your eventual goal race and/or performing solo time trials serve as great indicators as to how you're progressing. If your results are positive they also instil confidence, which is a wave you can ride all the way to your event.