

Training the 800 meter Athlete

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Coaching the 800 meter athlete

1. Traits and where to find your 800 meter mid distance athlete
 - A. During Cross Country season , look for those athletes who display sprint like mechanics during speed days, striders etc. Tall runners , good knee drive, efficient foot placement (runners not plodders)
 - B. The soccer teams are full of mid distance athletes (talk to your soccer coaches)
 - C. The 800 is the bridge between true sprinters and distance athletes.
 - D. The best 800 runners have the unique ability to change gears quickly, Respond to moves that are made withing the race
 - E. Early in the track season look closely at 400 meter types and encourage them to move up
 - F. Don't lock into " Sprint group" " Distance group mentality" mix and match. Develop a group with 200-400 types and your XC athletes that have shown foot speed
 - G. The 800 mentality can be a learned behavior through proper training ,
 - H. Distance based 800, (4x800) vs a speed based 800 runner
 - I. Gender differences?
 - J. General traits of effective 800 meter runners / KISS/ not too High / Not too low

Coaching the 800 meter athlete

2. Seasonal Training XC types vs Track only types

- a. Cross Country type athletes are more comfortable with mileage days and can still need that extra bit of mileage (over distance days that include some light speed work after there OD run (XC types are Crock Pot cooking)
- b. Track only types typically do not need the mileage that CC types accumulate, early season a little longer warm up and cool down, you can hide mileage on the Track as well
- c. Weight room? Ground force is important, core strength and an upper body that can respond to the rigors that the 800 demands (with a concentrated off season simple program these goals can be obtained
(light weight , high reps 2 sets of 15 in a circuit seems to work , Seb Coe, Joaquim Cruz)
- d. Speed can be obtained quickly but difficult to go back and gain strength
- e. Early I would rather hear , Breathing was fine, couldn't find next gear
- f. From end of XC season to beginning of Track, keep mileage within a normal range , slowly introduce speed, as 2nd semester approaches. Hills are a great way to start, and shorter up tempo efforts followed by 150's or 200's. Get legs accustomed to that type of turnover
- g. Have had mid 1:50 800 runners weekly mileage be anywhere from 15 mpw, to 50-55 mpw
- h. Meeting in the middle, "Hybrid" group., XC types speed day , is sprint types strength (extensive) days. Not afraid to throw 800 types in with Sprinters.

3. Workouts and their Purpose

Modalities and systems..., So how far, how fast and what rest? Basically as simple as that, but the art comes in how do we stack them..

Like the A effort B effort when setting up my week. Occasionally a C effort , but by working to hard on all efforts, you most likely get 3 mediocre workouts vs 1 excellent one.

Early High School Season : March 1st

Monday: 3 xs 1000 @ Cruise Interval pace 1 minute standing , rest 5 minutes, 8xs 200 @ Date pace , Warm up / Cool down

Tuesday: 40-50 minutes easy OD, Track , Drills and pushups, core and 3 or 4 150s

Wednesday: Hills, slope that you can run normally up, Changing gears from hams to quads

Thursday : 40 -50 minutes easy run Core , 150's

Friday: Fartlek, easy, back to track , drills core , throw in some 30 second surges during a shorter run

Saturday: Slow, recovery run

Sunday : Off

Start sprinkling in faster work as season goes on:

5-6 xs 300 meter at around goal pace, jog 100 sprint 100 meters

2 sets of 8 xs 100 meters, 15 seconds on 15 seconds off

3 sets of 400-400-200 1 minute rest in between reps, 10-12 minutes rest between sets

Differentials : run a 200 at 32-35 and drop last 100 meters faster.

Do a shorter (7- 10 minute) tempo effort and comeback to Track and do 300's at goal pace,

Ladders : 100-200-300-400-300-200-300-400 rest between reps jog distance just ran :

Cut downs: two sets of 4xs 200 start at 35/34/ 33/ 32 walk 50 meters recovery: take 5-8 minutes between sets

8xs 400 meters @ 70 with numbers 2,5,8 at 63

2 xs(300-500-400) negative split last 100

32-14. 66-14. 48-14

Hills : with stride change, pull/ push. Hamstrings to quads

Debriefing the workout (The coaches touch)

Don't fall in love with what is written down on the piece of paper:

So many variables when it comes to a "Hard effort" day

Weather

Long meets (multiple races)

Reading the room (how does warm up look)

How did first rep look ?

When Form breaks down.. what are you teaching them?

Difference between a good workout and a hard workout

Post workout : let athletes give feedback, (lean on upperclassmen) they know their bodies at this point and should be able to be trusted:

Give specific feedback: Like the way you attacked that workout

Your last repetition was really strong

We are ahead of where we were last year

You worked together really well as a group

Try to (if at all feasible) say something specifically to each person in the group.

Tell them this was a Turnover workout, or a strength workout.. this will help you in the last 200 meters.

Workouts done mindlessly will not develop the confidence needed to race successfully

Use visualization... " come of the last turn as if your finishing a race"

Use coaching cues like, run within yourself, maintain form, smooth.. put a surge in , come of curve and pop a little bit.. then relate that to a part of a race when people start to break away and have a plan for responding.

Race Day

The best athletes develop routines, a rhythm to their day...

What they eat, sleep patterns , arriving at a meet, mental preparation, snacks they bring, clothes they bring, cool down between races, second warm ups...

Be mindful of what you are entering your mid distance athletes in.. remember to count Friday nights as hard workouts.. Putting kids in correct races throughout the meat of the season can set them up for success during the championship run

Example for a XC based mid distance athlete (speed meet vs strength meet)

Speed meet: 4x800 open 400 4x400

Strength meet : 4x800, (off leg 2nd or 3rd leg) 1600 , 3200

Speed oriented 800 meter runner

Speed meet : Open 400, open 200 4x400

Strength meet : 4x800 , 800, 4x400

Shake out runs on Saturday: Sunday off

Race Plans?? I tell athletes that they make they're race plans on workout days.., without quality training, race plans are not of much use.

Generally however, encourage the first curve hard to establish position..,do not feel you need to go immediately to inside lane.. those that break hard and fast to inside most likely to get boxed in withing first 200 meters.., use home stretch on first lap to fix any mistakes.. if you need to surge to get out in open do it then , settle back in and be ready for last push.

Take fastest 400 add three -four seconds , what your first split should be through 400

Learned that you have time for two moves in an 800 meters.

In most High School races , the big move happens with 300 meters to go

Lessons learned

Workout groups are important... getting the Oil and gas mixed with your group is important:

Feed off each others strengths and weaknesses .. (long workouts , short workouts)

Don't be afraid to identify individuals that may need different training. It isn't a one size fits all.

Runners can get stagnate always running the same race... shake it up now and again

Don't forget that meet days are quality workouts

Athletes need consistency from you as a coach... you are their "North Star", for their performances.. when you are talking to them before and after races , be true to your coaching style.

Was told once that If you try to all of sudden become "Super Coach" on day of a big meet that it'll throw kids off and add to anxiety.

Be prepared for workouts, have a plan , adjust if you must.. explain what it is you are looking for ! Add your flavor , connect with kids in some way and you will experience success!