Development-Focused Coaching for (Middle) Distance Runners

SCOTT ABBOTT

SCOTT@RUNSRA.ORG

SUBMIT QUESTIONS FOR AFTERNOON Q+A ENDURANCE PANEL

The Profession of Coaching

Professionalizing the occupation

8 Characteristics of a Professionalized Occupation

- Professional education
- A distinct specialized body of knowledge
- Career structure and pathways
- Explicit ethical and value systems
- An independent professional membership body
- Professional practice
- Clarity and definition with regard to their role and remit
- Opportunities for continued professional development

Coaching IS a profession; all Coaches SHOULD be:

- Educated
- Certified
- Evaluated
- Accountable

Coach vs coach

Big “C” Coaching is NOT “Training”

Effective Coaching

- **Systematic**

planned, scientific

- **Developmental**

focused on growth, not results

- **Athlete-Centered**

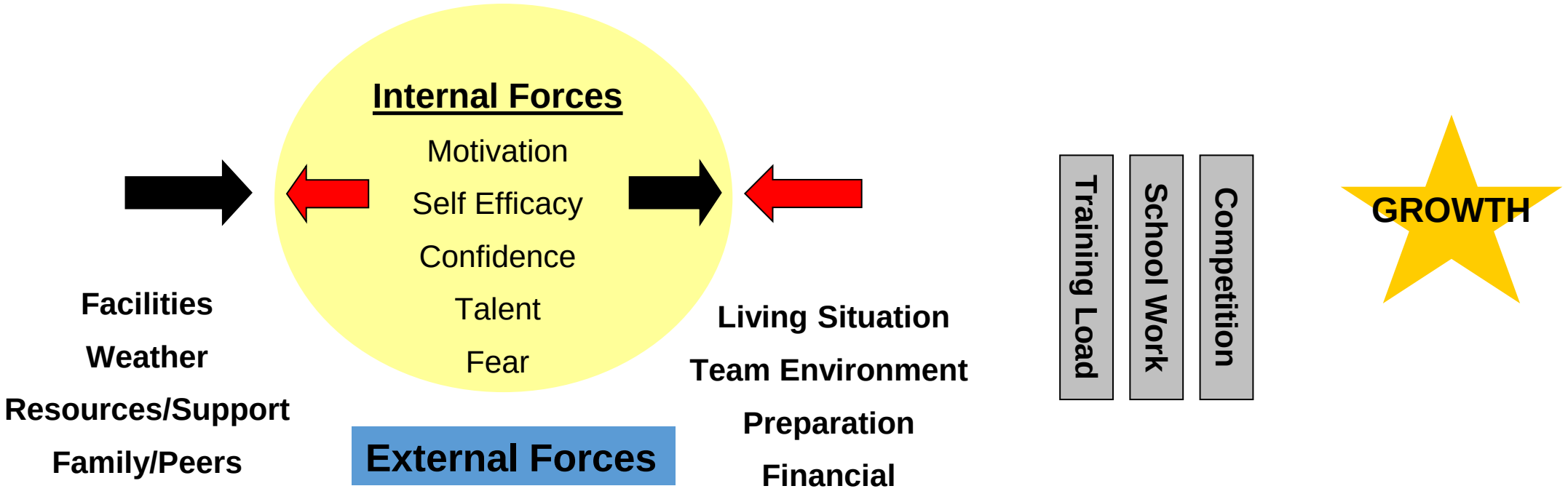
focused on athletes needs and where they are at rather than where you want/need them to be or where others are at

- **Positive**

focus on what athletes do right, not what they do wrong; build athletes up, don’t tear them down – fear-based coaching isn’t developmental or athlete-centered

Positive, Athlete-Centered Coaching focused on Development

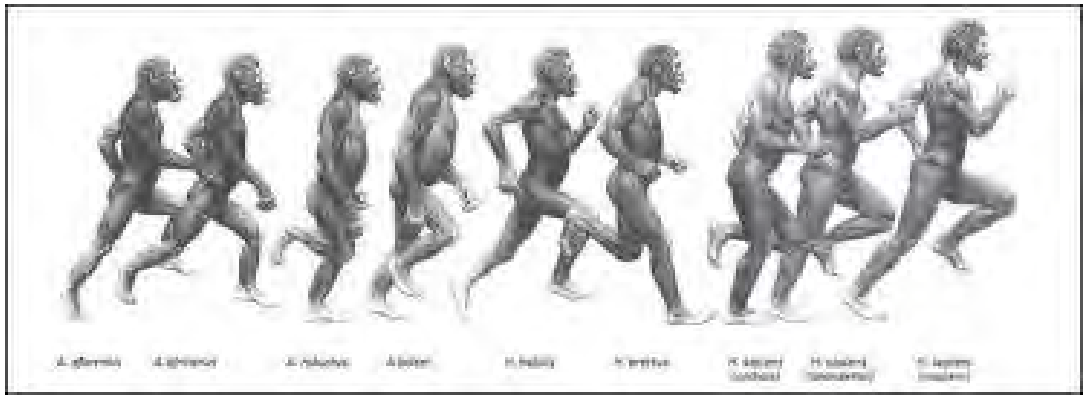
Managing “The Force Field” for athlete



A Coach SHOULD consider and manage all of the forces and by doing so can be a MAJOR positive external force that creates inertia towards growth.

That is Development → Coaching → IMPACT

Developmental Coaching



The most important tenet to developing endurance champions is:

Systematic long-term development

- Proper development is an accumulative multi-variate process
- There are many pieces to the puzzle and it takes a long time for them to all come together

America’s Relative Futility

- America’s scholastic sport structure MAY NOT be conducive to developing endurance champions
- We are relatively futile in endurance sports internationally
- Not a biological thing
- There isn’t a dominant country in endurance sports
- The United States is a massive and very diverse country; **we SHOULD dominate everything!**

The Optimal Developmental Model

Identify Talent

- Talent Identification programs
- Showcases, clinics, camps
- Youth competitions

Systematically develop talent

- Centralized Coaching system
- One central “playbook”

Optimal developmental timeline

- 0-14 (Romance): General athletic development
- 15-22(Precision): Specialization and systematic multi-lateral development
- 23+ (Integration): High performance training

Focus on international success at the senior level

- Junior National Team (13-17)
- U-23 National Team (18-22)
- Senior National Team (23+)

Goal:

World Champion by age of 27

“To get one top skier, we need three top coaches: club, regional, national level.”
-Erike Roste, Norwegian National Ski Coach

The American System

Weak Central Governing Body

- No talent identification programs
- No centralized coaching staff
- No mission/vision to develop athletes systematically
- We simply facilitate participation

Reliant on school sports

- No regulation or standards for coaching
- HS/club/college coaches have own agendas and goals
- No focus on long-term development or international competition

No Post-Scholastic structure

- Athletes should be working together to take-on the world; instead they are working alone to take on each other

"You can create, as a country, better opportunities to allow your top athletes to emerge. That's what we're lacking in this country, that's what we need. I think it's the USATF's responsibility to identify our outstanding future distance runners in high school and provide opportunities as they progress through college. We need to find sponsors that would be interested in helping America become more competitive in the long-distance races."

– Craig Masback, USATF CEO (1998-2008)

No focus on long term development for international success

Why should you care?

- Principles of long-term development can be applied in your coaching to maximize GROWTH and DEVELOPMENT over the 4 years that you have them
  - Development is development, regardless of the length of time, and the recipe for growth is the same
  - Systematically develop your athletes to maximize growth potential

Instead of maxing your athletes out; increase their max

Systematic Development

Systematic

- Have a plan
- Know where you want to end up and work backwards

Development

- Target growth, not results
- “Wait Training” (be patient!)
- Just because you can, doesn’t mean you should

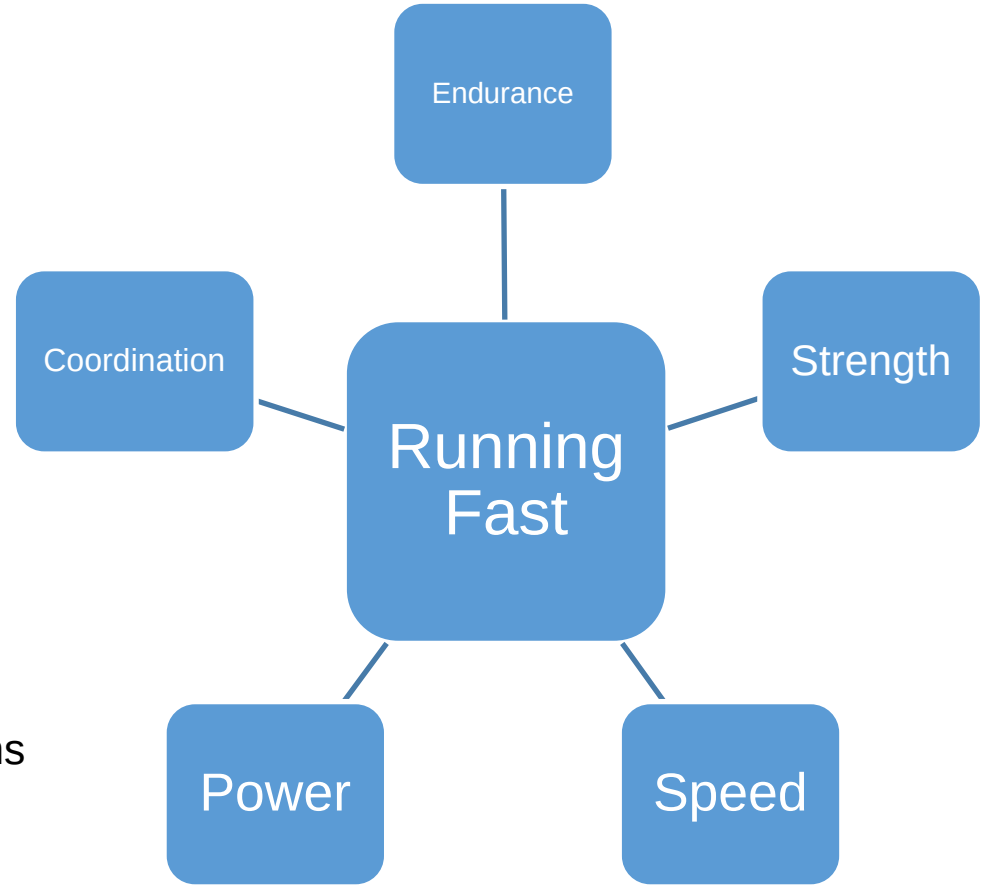
Developing an endurance athlete is like cooking ribs…for best results… slow cook!

Multi-Lateral Training for (Middle) Distance Runners

- Develop the whole ***athlete***
- Periodize to emphasize different systems and skills at different times of the year and from year to year
- Address all skills and energy systems in all phases of training
- Differentiate by employing different stimuli and different vehicles in training
- Don’t overload any one system or over-employ any one stimulus

Importance of Athleticism

- Running is an activity; running *fast* is a skill
- Being a complete athlete increases ability to compete to win in the sport
- Total athleticism is key to helping runner absorb training loads and stay injury free
  - Pianists vs. Typists



Ways to Develop Athleticism

•Play other sports
•Obstacle course/Circuits
•Mobility, agility, and stability exercises
•Strength and plyometric training
•Neural-muscular exercises (ie Drills)

•Dynamic warm-ups/cool-downs
•Hip and core work
•Proprioception exercises
•**Sprinting**

The Bio-Motor Skills and Energy Systems

Bio-motor Skills

- Speed
- Strength
- Power
- Flexibility
- Coordination

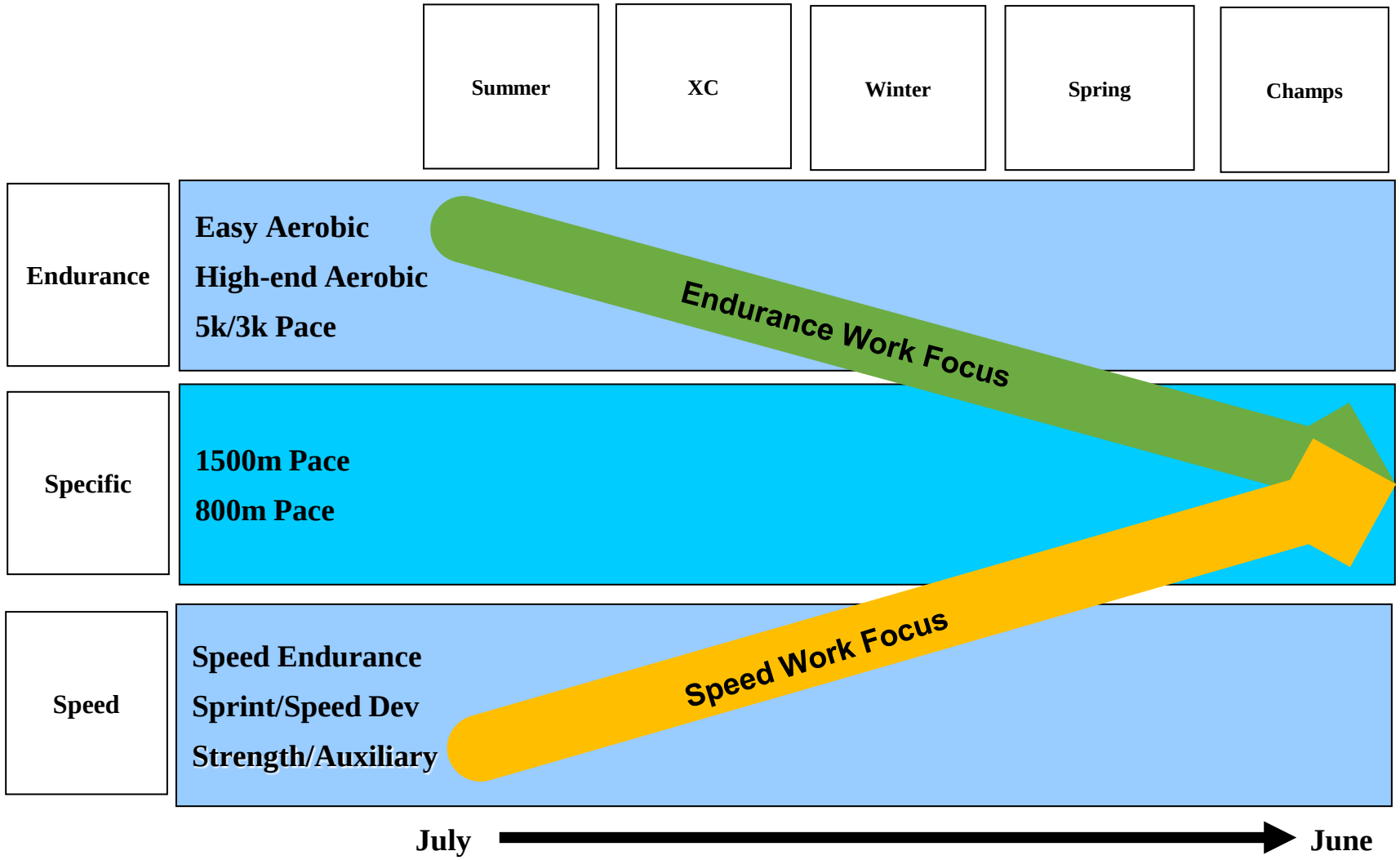
Energy Systems

- General Aerobic
- High-end Aerobic
- V02Max
- Speed Endurance
- Lactic/Anaerobic
- Sprint/Power

"It is not enough to do work for work's sake. Obviously, distance swimmers must train aerobically, but not exclusively. All energy systems must be trained for success in any event."

– Don Talbot, coach, Australian National Swim Team

Planning the Year (Middle Distance)



Training Principles

1) We address **all pace zones in every phase of training (**at least once every 14-21 days).
2) In terms of emphasis, we work from **peripherals to specific.**
3) We try to **resist urge to get too specific too soon.**
   a) Athletes are naturally strong and comfortable here and will push for it
   b) System can get overloaded → burnout!
   c) Races are workouts

Planning the Year (Middle Distance)

Summer

Priotity
General Aerobic

Secondary
High-End Aerobic
Sprint/Power

Pepper In
Potpourri Workouts

Cross Country

Priotity
High-End Aerobic

Secondary
General Aerobic
V02Max
Sprint/Power

Pepper In
Speed Endurance

Winter

Priotity
High-End Aerobic

Secondary
General Aerobic
Vo2Max
Speed Endurace
Sprint/Power

Pepper In
Race Specific

Early Spring

Priotity
V02Max

Secondary
General Aerobic
Race Specific
Speed Endurance
High-End Aerobic

Pepper In
Sprint/Power

Championship Season

Priotity
Race Specific

Secondary
Speed Endurance
Vo2Max
General Aerobic

Pepper In
High-End Aerobic
Sprint/Power

Differentiate Stimuli/“Toolbox”

Endurance Training

General Aerobic

- Easy Runs
- Long Runs
- “Medium-Long” Runs
- Doubles/”Shake-outs”
- Soft surfaces

High-end Aerobic

- Steady Pace Runs
- Progression Runs
- Tempo Runs (20 min max)
- Fartlek Runs
- Hill Climbs
- Tempo Intervals (20-25 mins)
  - Continuous or short rest (3:1 or 4:1 work-rest ratio)
- XC Intervals
- XC or Road Races
- Ideally off-track and on soft surfaces

Specific Training

V02Max (5k/3k Pace)

- 600-1000m Intervals (v=4-8k)
- Equal rest (or 3:2 work-rest ratio)
- Long hill intervals
- 3200m races
- Fartlek Training

1600m Pace

- 300-600m Intervals (v=2-4k)
- 2:3 work-rest ratio
- 45-75 sec hill reps
- 1600m races
- Fartlek Training

800m Pace (no such thing)

- 150-600m Intervals (v=1-2k)
- 1:2 work-rest ratio
- Broken distances with shorter rest for lactate tolerance
- 800m races
- 2x400m or 600m races

Speed Training

Speed Endurance

- 150m-300m (v-600m-1k)
- Broken distances with shorter recovery for lactate toleance
- 400m races, 4x400m legs
- 100-150m hill reps
- Kick drills/Start Drills/Break Drills

Lactic/Anaerobic

- 80m-150m Reps (v=400-600m)
- Full recovery or in/out
- Hill Sprints
- Competitive games

Speed Development/Alactic

- 40-80m reps
- Full recovery or in/out
- Acceleration work
- Gauntlet and other “speed games”
- 30-60m hill sprints

Auxiliary Training

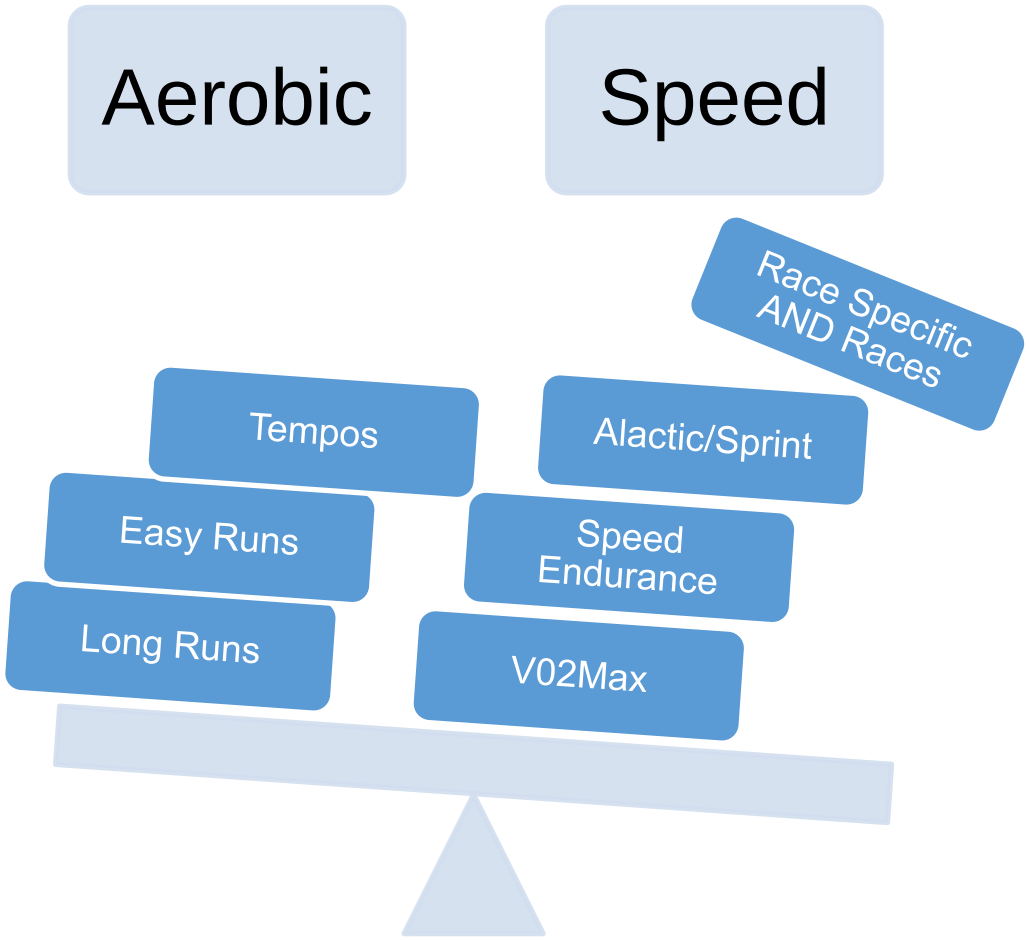
Pitfalls of “Overload/Unload”

Keep balanced approach throughout all macrocycles

Be careful not to “over-cook” any one area

- **Remember: Races are workouts too!**

Be careful not to neglect any one area; keep rotating the meat!



Pitfalls of “Overload/Unload”

Peaking

- Where all the pieces come together with race specific work at the center of it all
- Not a time to start shedding types of training; **must continually “tap” all systems**
  - When you go away from a type of training, it is like letting air out of your tires --

    a slow leak always ends up flat!

If you want to drop volume/intensity to give athlete sense of “freshness”, then truncate work; don’t eliminate work

Sample Schedule Fall/Winter

Day	System	Vehicle	Auxiliary
1	General Aerobic	Easy Run	Strides + Strength Circuit
2	Vo2Max	Fartlek	Dynamic WU/CD
3	General Aerobic + Speed	Moderate Endurance Run + Hill Sprints	Stability + Proprioception
4	General Aerobic	Easy Recovery Run	Core+Hurdle Drills
5	High-End Aerobic	Tempo Intervals	Dynamic WU/CD
6	General Aerobic	Easy Long Run	
7	Recovery	Recovery Run, Cross Train, or Rest	
8	Speed Endurance	60-90 sec Hill Reps	Dynamic WU/CD
9	General Aerobic	Easy run	Strides + Strength circuit
10	General Aerobic	Easy run	Dynamic WU/CD
11	High-end Aerobic + Speed	Progression Run + 150m ins/outs	Stability + Proprioception
12	Recovery	Pre-meet	Core+Hurdle Drills
13	High-End Aerobic	XC Race	Dynamic WU/CD
14	General Aerobic	Easy Long Run	

Sample Schedule Early Spring

Day	System	Vehicle	Auxiliary
1	General Aerobic	Easy Run	Strides + Strength Circuit
2	Vo2Max	600/800m reps	Dynamic WU/CD
3	General Aerobic	Moderate Endurance Run	Stability + Proprioception
4	Speed/Lactic	80-100-120-150 ladder	Dynamic WU/CD
5	Recovery	Pre-meet	Core+Hurdle Drills
6	V02Max	3200m race	Dynamic WU/CD
7	Recovery	Recovery Run, Cross Train, or Rest	
8	High-End Aerobic	Tempo Intervals	Dynamic WU/CD
9	General Aerobic	Easy run	Strides+Strength Circuit
10	Lactate Tolerance	League Meet – 400m; 4x400m	Dynamic WU/CD
11	General Aerobic	Easy recovery run	
12	Recovery	Pre-meet	Core+Hurdle Drills
13	Race Specific	1600m Race	Dynamic WU/CD
14	General Aerobic	Easy Long Run	

Sample Schedule Spring/Champs

Day	System	Vehicle	Auxiliary
1	General Aerobic	Easy Run	Strides+Strength Circuit
2	Race Specific	300m/400m reps	Dynamic WU/CD
3	General Aerobic	Easy Recovery run	
4	General Aerobic	Easy Recovery Run	Core+Hurdles
5	Speed Endurance	150m/200m reps	Dynamic WU/CD
6	General Aerobic	Easy Long Run	
7	Recovery	Rest	
8	High-End Aerobic	Truncated Tempo Intervals	Dynamic WU/CD
9	General Aerobic	Easy run	Light circuit
10	Recovery	Pre-meet	Core+Hurdles
11	Race Specific	800m Prelim	Dynamic WU/CD
12	Recovery	Pre-meet	Core+Hurdles
13	Race Specific	1600m/800m Final	Dynamic WU/CD
14	Recovery	Rest	

Development-Focused Coaching for (Middle) Distance Runners

SCOTT ABBOTT

SCOTT@RUNSRA.ORG

SUBMIT QUESTIONS FOR AFTERNOON Q+A ENDURANCE PANEL