

TRAIN FOR 2017: PART 3 OF 6

SET BENCHMARK, RUN WITH PRECISION

Post-festivities is the ideal time to assess your current fitness and start planning your New Year's training with more accuracy. Here's **Spencer Smith's** how-to guide...



Post-Christmas festivities, start slowly getting back into a rhythm before assessing your current fitness level

Even though it's another month away, it's worth thinking ahead to January, which, for me, was always a month of two halves. At the beginning of the month I tended to concentrate on getting back into a rhythm, returning to a more predictable schedule post-Christmas festivities. The latter part of the month was more about assessing my current fitness level by doing a simple little benchmark test (see session opposite). The test wasn't about how hard I could go, but rather, and more importantly, the data I was able to extract from it so that the coming weeks could be planned with more precision and accuracy.

I was always quite relaxed in January, and even though my motivation was sky high I felt it was

important not to have too much expectation, and not to try and force the training. A sense of calm was always the order of the day. Here are three pointers that may help the first month(s) of the New Year run a little more efficiently, and in turn set you up for a very productive winter.

- Let the body come around slowly. Accepting your current fitness level is all part of the patience game of reaching great form, at the right time.
- Once you have a good couple of weeks under your belt (with the emphasis being on consistency rather than worrying about intensity or pace), you can start to include some very

small 20-30sec pick-up efforts within a run. Pick-ups are NOT maximum efforts, but rather a steady increase in speed and leg turnover. The aim is to keep the form together while trying to engage those fast-twitch muscles. Be sure to include a longer warm-up first before inserting the first pick-up. I generally insert them every fifth minute or so.

- It's a perfect time of year to concentrate on form with specific run drills. E.g walking quad stretch, walking deep lunge stretch into a hamstring stretch, butt kicks, high knee, hip circles, walking lunge twist. (You can find all these drills and more on the 220 website - <http://bit.ly/2fcs0h8>.) ■ 220

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 **30min benchmark test**

THE SESSION

KIT CHECKLIST

- RUN TRAINING SHOES ● RUN TIGHTS ● GLOVES
- HAT ● GOOD BASE LAYER ● JACKET ● RUN TRACK

The benchmark test that I like to use is called the aerobic function (MAF) test. The idea behind it is simple - to measure your aerobic progress at a set intensity. The intensity of the test should be done at very close to 75% of your maximum heart rate. The test should be performed on a flat circuit, preferably a track as conditions and terrain consistency are of paramount importance throughout the test. Take note of weather conditions (the wind, humidity, temp) on test day.

WARM-UP

- 5mins @ PE 2-3, find legs
- 10mins @ PE 4
- Rest for a few minutes before commencing the test to allow HR to drop and recover. Take note of what your HR before commencing the test.

MAIN SESSION

- 5km (12.5 laps of 400m track) @ a set intensity of 75% of your HRmax. It's important that you have a good idea of your maximum HR prior to starting the test. The goal is simple - run as fast as possible while making sure you keep to your 75% of HRmax. The test is NOT about how fast you can possibly run 5km, but rather how fast you can run the 5km at a set intensity.

COOL-DOWN

- Walk or shuffle (slower than a jog) until HR is under control.

*PE = Perceived Exertion. 1 being NO effort & 10 being MAX effort. See overleaf for more information.

Adapt for beginners

Reduce the test to 2 miles or eight laps on a 400m track, maintaining the integrity of the test.

Adapt for Ironman

Increase test to 10km, maintaining the integrity of the test.

BEST TEST

Be sure that you're rested prior to taking the test; complete it every 4-6 weeks; conditions should be similar each time for an accurate comparison.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the test is to see whether the development of the aerobic system is taking place. You'll know when you go further/faster with the same effort.

NOT FOR ALL

Compare the monthly results and evaluate whether upping the intensity is beneficial. Remember, we're not all suited to the same training.