



# OPTIMIZING RACE SEQUENCE & INTEGRATING APPROPRIATE RACE MODELS



# RATIONALE FOR PLANNING AHEAD

- A great deal of information is provide through coaches education on program design, periodization and implementation.
- What is rarely discussed is how to best plan the season of races for the athletes.
- Coaches will often spend hours planning the right tempo runs, intervals, distance run, expansive strength programs but often won't know what races their athlete is going to race until the day entries are due.
- It is just as important to plan what race, where and when and how as it is the rest of the training.
- Proper planning can be the difference between an athlete who is continually improving and an athlete who remains relatively undeveloped

# TALE OF TWO SEASONS

- Kenzie Jones Freshman mid year transfer joined the team in mid January with no preseason work in our system.
- Without a lot of back ground on performance or set of clear goals we did almost no planning
- Her perception of her self was as a “distance” runner with a strong aversion to running shorter races.
- Minor hamstring injury in February from running in snow pack lead to a brief interruption of training
- Partly due to resistance by the athlete and not being focused as a coaches she was allowed to run the 5000 4 meets in a row, albeit with scripted or race plans.
- Season ended in disappointment for the athlete and staff
- Staff and athlete resolved to plan better the next year with the inclusion of short races

# FAILURE & SUCCESS

## 2016 Season

- 1/22 Mile 5:41
- 1/29 3000m
- 3/18 5000 19:59 negative split race plan
- 3/25 5000 19:06 even pace – attempt to qualify – failed
- 4/9 5000 19:22 windy conditions limited performance
- 4/16 5000 19:13 failed qualify attempt
- 4/23 10k 39:21 qualified for conference
- 5/6 1500 failed attempt to PR
- 5/12 PSAC Crash and burn 10k 42:07

## 2017 Season

- 12/9 5000 18:44
- 1/20 3000 11:05
- 1/27 Mile 5:25
- 2/3 5000 18:25
- 2/10 OFF
- 2/18 Mile 5:21
- 2/25-26 5000 18:03 /Mile 5:13
- 3/24 10,000 39:03 controlled
- 4/1 1500 4:56
- 4/8 3000 10:25 (high winds)
- 4/22 1500 4:52 last 300 55
- 4/27 5000 Penn relays 17:38
- 4/29 800 2:27
- 5/4 PSAC 4:46
- 5/12 36:43

# THE DIFFERENCE

- The 2017 season consisted of 16 consecutive personal best with only one or two race slightly below expectations
- The streak continued to 17 this December
- What was the difference? Evaluation, Planning, better engagement by the athlete to race shorter distances
- The 2016 was not the norm for the program and poor planning and evaluation on my part as a coach cost this athlete a year of development and some really poor performances

# I) EVALUATE YOUR ATHLETE OBJECTIVELY

- Is this a national, conference or developing level athlete
- What are the athletes strength and weakness in racing
- Be sure to do this at time when you are not emotionally up from a great performance
- As best you can, don't over reach with goals
- Don't guess, or worse, base your evaluation on feelings, use objective data

## 2) EVALUATE YOUR TEAM OBJECTIVELY

- Is your team a contender for a championship title – if so will you need this athlete to double or triple to do so. If not a contender for a title how important is your place in the standings
- What is better for your athlete and then your program?
- Consider the possibility that your best athlete may have to run or go to meets the rest of the team can not

### 3) FAILURE TO PLAN IS PLANNING TO FAIL

- Plan your races for the whole season indoor and outdoor. Work back from the last meet
- Know your meet schedule and events offered.
- Know the meets that produce qualifying times
- DO NOT CHASE MARKS – Chase competition
- Don't count on last chance meets – typically they end up no chance
- Account for environmental factors during planning – take into account temperature – cold early, hot late, wind, time of day,



# WHAT NOT TO DO

- Don't think of athletes or events like "position players"
- Don't run your athlete in the same event every week. This may work for other events but not for endurance athletes
- Avoid running events back to back weeks – in particular the 5k
- Don't make every meet a high intensity meet. Include some low key meets
- Every race does not have to be about fastest times or winning – some can and should be scripted races

# INTUITIVE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RACE SEQUENCING

- Race under distance the week before championship
- Plan only 2-3 5000m indoor races well spaced out
- Plan for 2 10k's. older athletes maybe able to do 3
- If possible don't race more than 3 weeks in a row
- Double in a meet as little as possible or at least in a purposeful and controlled manner
- Run the steeple after having run both a 5000 and 1500 in that order
- 5000m at 3:00 on windy Saturday afternoon suck – don't do it
- Steeple chase races in late March with ice in the pit are asking for torn achilles

# BASIC RACE MODELS & SUPPORT RACES

- 800 – Qualify/PR or Championship race best with a slight positive split no more than 2.5 seconds.
- Use of 500, 600 and 1000 as support races. Teaching races models – go out deliberately too fast, sit and kick (enter in slower race) Use 4\*400 as sharpening
- Mile Qualify/PR – as even as possible with slight negative split. Variation can include each 400 progressively faster.
- Championship race – for men be ready to finish off a slower pace for women kick off a faster pace. Men at the National level must be ready to run 26.5-27.5 the last 200 women 30 to 32.
- 800, 1000, 3000 all make excellent support races. Use of 4\*400 can help hone fast finishes

# THE IMPORTANCE OF THE 3000M

- Best race model in 3 splits +3/AP/-3 to 5 (based on ability to close).
- 3000 Maybe the most important race to use for purposes of fitness evaluation. It may also be the hardest race to get right.
- Any mistakes in the first 1000m can lead to huge deficits over the last 1000m.
- Athletes who can be disciplined enough to execute this race plan should be able to do any race model.
- Athletes who struggle here will struggle at other races.
- It is also the best race to use to evaluate fitness

## 5000 & 10,000

- 5000 Qualify/PR even to slight negative split.
- Championships race have a lot more variance than Mile races. Recently the ability to run the first 3 kilometers at just over PR pace and then finish the last 2 kilometers at near 3k pace have been common.
- 1000m Mile/1500, 3k and scripted races, are excellent support races.
- Fill the gap race plan is often highly effective at Championships and large invitational
- 10,000 Qualifying best done in an even or slight negative split race plan
- Championship races are often races of attrition.
- Note this is the race that requires the most planning.
- Don't underestimate the recovery time needed for this race.
- You may only have one shot to get this race right.

# SCRIPTED RACE MODELS

- Planned races that work on other factors than time or place
- Race models are to prepare the athlete towards a championship racing or on developing the athlete's weakness.
- Break the models up to focus on one or two aspects of a race model.
- Don't be afraid to create scripted races in the primary event

## EXAMPLES OF SCRIPTED RACES

- 800m Direct the athlete to go out too fast. Conversely ask them to sit and kick.
- Mile – enter athlete in slower than usual heat have them sit in the pack and work on finishing kick
- Scripted 3000m race to help learn to close better – out on +pace then slow down to + 10, close out faster
- Scripted 3000 to help with 5000m run first 2k at 5k pace then drop to 3k pace
- 5000 scripted early season – alternate fast kilometer pace, +8, pace, +8, 3k pace
- 1000m 800 at mile pace last 200 kick

## PUTTING IT ALL IN PLAY – EXAMPLE SCHEDULES

- |                            |                             |                           |                     |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------|
| ■ Primary event 5000m      | Outdoor                     | ■ Primary event Mile/1500 | ■ Outdoor           |
| ■ Indoor                   | 1500/800                    | ■ 800                     | ■ 800               |
| ■ Mile –even pace          | 3000                        | ■ 1000 even               | ■ 3000              |
| ■ 1000m                    | 1500                        | ■ 3000m                   | ■ 1500 Qualifier    |
| ■ 5000m Qualifier          | 5000 Qualifier – night race | ■ Mile Qualifier          | ■ 800               |
| ■ 3000m 2k/1k Race plan    | Off                         | ■ 1000 800/200            | ■ 1500 sit and kick |
| ■ Mile work on fast finish | 1500                        | ■ 600                     | ■ 800               |
| ■ 5000                     | 5000                        | ■ Mile Conference         | ■ 1500 Conference   |



# FINAL THOUGHTS

- Samples in a vacuum are good to look at in principle but you really have to evaluate the weather, time of day, competition, travel and academic schedule. You also have to include the athlete in on the decisions of where and when to race but be clear about what needs to be done.
- Not every athlete is going to PR in 16 races – last year we had several that set bests in 8 or 9 races some are going to have bad days and it may be that even with the best planning the season will tank.
- Just make sure it tanks for some reason other than poor planning