



From Da' Coach by Coach Will

WHAT WORKOUT IS BEST?

"I only have the time and energy for one fast workout per week. Which should it be: track intervals, hill climbs, or a hard, steady run?"

The quick answer is that it depends on your goal race distance and where you are in your training schedule, but let's assume that you are interested in increasing your speed in 5K and 10K races. In this instance the *best* workout would be track intervals. Doing repeat intervals at a track provides several benefits. First, it is an accurate measured distance. Second, you don't have to worry about traffic or terrain. And third, it improves your physical and mental toughness. Running intervals is one of the fastest ways to improve your speed. Running repeat intervals will also help with your form. When you run a faster pace your body will look for the most economical biomechanical position to run, which allows you to experiment with hand position, knee lift, trunk rotation and breathing.

When you do repeat intervals with proper rest intervals it produces several changes in your body. If done at the proper pace it will increase your lactic acid threshold, improve your VO2 max, and build new capillaries and mitochondria in the muscles, all necessary elements in running faster in races. Also when you do race pace repeats it teaches your muscles the "feel" of the pace you want to run in your event. By doing track intervals you will be able to quickly see your improvement as each week passes.

The other options of hill climbs and a hard, steady run can also have a place in your schedule. It is good to vary your type of workout to work different muscle groups and to prevent mental and physical burnout. The hill repeats are, as Frank Shorter once said, speedwork in disguise, but don't necessarily build the type of strength you need unless you are running a hilly race, while hard steady runs are a critical aspect of half-marathon and marathon training. Incorporating these types of workouts on alternate weeks with track intervals will improve your overall conditioning for races of any distance.

See you at the races...

Coach Will