

TRAINING PLAN FOR RUNNING AN ULTRA

PHASES OF EFFECTIVE TRAINING

There are four essential components to building safe and effective training for ultra marathon races.

BASE BUILDING PHASE

6 to 20 Weeks

Base building is a prerequisite to safe ultra marathon training. Your running base is the foundation that will support the increased stress of high mileage peak training for ultra marathons. Skimping on your base building is likely to increase the risk of breakdown or injury that may occur during your peak training. Your base phase is defined as the six-to-twenty week period before your peak training begins. A new runner will obviously require a longer base building period because it is during this phase that muscle conditioning and bone density building occur to support the more strenuous phases to follow.

This period should include easy-to-moderate running that increases your weekly mileage according to the Galloway 10% rule. During your base building phase, you should avoid any strenuous workouts or races that will require any recovery time. The goal of base building is to just put your body into shape to support your peak ultra marathon training load. Be sure to take a good 3-4 week recovery period at the end of your base building phase.

PEAK BUILDING PHASE

12 to 16 Weeks

This is where the work really begins. Following one of the training plans, you will begin ramping up the mileage and intensity of your training runs. Your weekend training runs will comprise the bulk of your mileage and will be race specific; meaning you will train to the terrain, climate, running surface, and profile of your target race. Your mid-week runs will fill in the mileage and will

include one good tempo run each week to improve your overall speed. This phase will include at least two rest days each week and will include recovery weeks throughout. One of the differences in ultra marathon training over traditional training is that ultra marathons are slower paced races that often include miles and miles of ascents and descents so attention is given to building up a high volume of "time on your feet" and should include a good amount of walking or power hiking as well as running.

PEAK TRAINING PHASE

4 to 6 Weeks

During this phase, you will cap your mileage and maintain your peak training load for a few more runs. As your body becomes more primed for peak training, you will find your recovery time is improved even after hard workouts. You might feel so good that you are tempted to do more or run a race but the rule in this phase is "less is more". The closer you get to your race date, the less margin for error. Take all rest days and rest weeks as scheduled.

TAPER PHASE

Smart runners take a Taper period. The training plans will graduate your mileage down to increase your rest and recovery. Use this time to meditate and visualize your desired running experience. Get extra hours of sleep. Plan your race strategies, gear and clothing, drop bags, crew and pacers, blister care, etc. However tempted you may be, you must resist the urge for "just one more long run". It is always better to go into your race "a little under-trained than a little over-injured".