

GTC NEWSLETTER

“All one has to do to be a ‘real’ runner is run. We’re all real runners.”

Jennifer Dupas quoted by John Bingham,
No Need for Speed



UPCOMING RACES

MAY

Zoom Through the Zoo 5K – May 8
Freedom Flyer 5K – May 31

JUNE

Sunrise Run 8K – June 12

JULY

Red, White & Blue Shoes 5K – July 3

AUGUST

Edouard Michelin Memorial 5k – Aug. 21

SEPTEMBER

43rd GTC Reedy River Run 10K – Sept. 6
BMW Performance Classic – Sept. 10

OCTOBER

Spinx Runfest – Oct. 30
Full Marathon/Half Marathon will be scored 70/60/50/40/30
Half Marathon will be scored 60/50/40/30/20
10K and 5k finishers earn 10 points.

NOVEMBER

Paris Mtn. Road Races. 20K, 10K & 5K
The 20K will be scored 60/50/40/30/20
10K and 5k finishers earn 10 points

DECEMBER

Santa Run 5k – Dec. 18

A MESSAGE FROM YOUR GTC PRESIDENT

By Robin Walter, GTC President

Do you see it? Do you feel it? Encouraging signs are all around us. With every day that goes by, our calendars are starting to fill up; yet, we must not forget. We must hold on to the blocks of time that we take for ourselves to do things we enjoy. We must also continue to do our parts in maintaining and protecting others. Self-awareness and awareness of those around us brings such a different prospective and comradery. Because of this, GTC is starting to venture out cautiously and excitedly in different ways and you are encouraged to join us!

MAY 3RD, 6 PM AT LAKE CONESTEE WE ARE HAVING OUR FIRST 2021 GTC MEETING! All are invited to come. Our guest speakers will be the amazing GTC ELITE Coach and member of Women’s Running Coaching Collective organization, Laura Caldwell, plus some of the GTC ELITE athletes. We will be following COVID-19 protocol (maintaining distance between each other and wearing mask when moving near each other) out of respect for others and looking forward to getting everyone together after a long year.

Another way we are venturing out is through our social media! Please like and follow us on Greenville Track Club Facebook and Instagram pages. Please share all of our posts so that we can continue to grow. We encourage you and others to interact with us as we give the pages

that have been around a while new life and a new face lift. After the last

year of only doing things virtually, the creative ways of still interacting at a distance is a major key to this day and time.

We do have a few more things in the works to be able to reach out to many more as well as planning all of your past favorite and new favorite GTC events in person. There is nothing like getting together in person feeling the excitement and anticipation at the start of an event! Sign up early, on time or late. It doesn’t matter when; we just can’t wait to see you out there! So many encouraging, positive signs of getting back out there with this amazing community! **GTC wants to be out there encouraging you in all you do!! Let’s do this!**

Robin Walter

Have any questions or ideas? Please let me know at president@greenvilletrackclub.com



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MEET A MEMBER: SUNDAY DAVIS

By Bill Blask



Sunday Davis is ranked in the top 10 among female runners in South Carolina this year.

She is a 34 year old teacher of special education resource at the elementary level at Forest Acres Elementary school.

This is the first part of our editor's interview with Sunday.

DEVELOPMENT– SCHOOL YEARS

B: When you were at Clemson, you ran both indoor and outdoor track and cross country. Did you have a favorite among those three venues?

No, I really enjoyed different parts, different aspects of each season. I liked cross country. I felt like there was more of a team bond, because there are fewer girls and you're all doing the same thing.

Indoor track was really fun to run on the Virginia Tech track. It's a banked track that felt so fast. That is where I had my 5K PR.

That's really fun just to do something different, especially because we don't have an indoor track in high school here, so it was completely new. It did take an adjustment the first time I ran indoors in that kind of building. I thought, 'You can't breathe!' You feel like you're suffocating. People don't realize that when you're doing the distance events, running a 5K indoors, it's a lot of laps breathing the same air!

And then the outdoor venue was unique because I originally was a 5K runner. That was another new experience as a freshman, getting to run the 10K. I was approached by somebody saying "I think you'll be a good 10K runner. Have you ever thought about it?" No, but I guess today I'm gonna think about it!

B: How did you take to the 10k? Was it easy for you?

My freshman year I had several different coaching changes, because the coach that recruited me was actually gone by the time I got there. Larry Clark coached me during Cross Country. We didn't have a coach for indoor, and we coached ourselves. Outdoor we had Laurie Haughey. She was our volunteer coach. I ran very well with her. Her training suited me very well, and she said, "I think you're gonna be really good 10K runner. So you're going to give it a shot."

And it actually went surprisingly well the first time I ran it. It was at Clemson, and there were only two other girls in the race. So I just had to completely pace myself and it's kind of ... running the 10K on outdoor tracks, I think of it as mentally running a marathon. You have to break it up into each lap. Whereas running a marathon you break it up into each mile, in a 10k you break it up into

each lap, and you just see if you can run the same pace, lap after lap.

B: Can we talk briefly about the kind of strategy that you found useful. For example, you're talking about trying to keep a fairly steady pace throughout each lap, each portion of that 10k.

Yes, but that's easier said than done!

B: From the first to the last of a race, say the 10K, is there a struggle to control the energy you give on that first mile? Or do you just go into a steady pace from the start and try to keep it?

It depends on the day and how I feel. Yes, I think most of the time you have to remind yourself that it should go easy in the beginning, and you know hopefully your training has set you up to know the pace and know your legs, and just go out and run how you feel. Hopefully, that first mile split is where you need to be.

B: So, take us through the whole race: you're going along and you're keeping your pace. And then we come to the last mile. Do you find yourself using any technique or approach or thought pattern? Do you approach that last mile any differently than the miles before it?

When I was in 7th grade, my coach told me the way to run a 5k. The first mile is Relax. The second mile is Repeat. The third mile is Race. And so I use that a lot. And again it's easier said than done! You're just trying to survive. But as far as the races where everything has come together and I've run PRs, that's been the way I've approached my PRs. If it's a longer race, then you just adjust it to where the middle parts of the race are the Repeat. But I use it a lot with 5Ks to remind myself.

A RUNNING FAMILY

B: You began running fairly early, when you were eight or nine?

Well, I actually ran my first mile when I was three. I don't remember it.

B: Three?! Three years old?

Yes, I come from a family of runners, so, you know, we just grew up being in races. My parents would race. So, yeah, the first one I was three. I think my first 5K was when I was eight or nine, and then I started running cross country and track in seventh grade. So that's when I really started training and

running daily. I've got a lot of fond memories of growing up around a lot of the races that I run now. The Midnight Flight was always a really fun race. We ran with the Anderson Roadrunners: my parents were a big part of that club. I am one of four children and we all were really close to our cousins - there's five of them. It used to start at midnight. I remember us taking our sleeping bags to the Anderson Civic Center.

We kids would be awake until way after midnight. During the race, our parents would take turns: which one ran the 5k or the 10k, who was volunteering to help the race staff, and who would take shifts watching the children. It's neat to still be doing that same race years later. My daughter has also run the mile a couple of times.

B: Running with a family with that kind of interest has got to have been a part of the pleasure, as you've described it, because they understood what you were going through and you got some help and advice and certainly a lot of support from the family.

Right. Yes, my mother actually recently read a book about NFL players where they talk about their first coach being their Dad. I think of that, and remember her giving me help when I first started running in seventh grade. During the summer when there wasn't practice or it was offseason, she was running with me, giving me advice.

B: You have a grandmother who ran until she was well into her later years.

Yes. My grandmother passed away at the age of 99. I don't know how many state records she has now. But she completed her last 5K when she was 95.

B: That is incredible by any standard.

She was amazing. I remember I walked with her in the Greenville News Race Downtown race in January one year. I had twisted my ankle running on trails, I guess that December, and I wasn't ready to race. So I walked with her, and it was a brisk walk! My aunt also runs. My Mother and my Aunt were and still are very competitive. Watching them when I was growing up was really neat. And now, as a mother with a full time job, I see how they learned to develop and balance it all.

B: You have one child now?

I have a daughter who is seven, and a son who is three.

B: Do you see them doing some running as well?

We've done the little Greenville Track Club summer meet. When my son Ford was two he was shy at first, but he finally did one of the little events. My daughter Jade has done several.

Part two in the next issue

CORPORATE SHIELD RUNNING

2021 CORPORATE SHIELD RACES

JANUARY 9-17: Run Downtown 5K

APRIL 17: ZF Get In Gear Road Race

MAY 8: Zoom through the Zoo 5K

JUNE 12: Sunrise Run 8K

JULY 3: Red, White & Blue Shoes 5K

AUGUST 21: Edouard Michelin 5K Memorial Race

SEPTEMBER 10: BMW Performance Classic 2 mile

OCTOBER 9: GE Cross-Country Race 6K

If your company or organization is interested in forming a team, please reach out to Sarah at corporateshield@greenvilletrackclub.com for details.



CORPORATE SHIELD AT MILLIKEN

By Beth Trenor

Greetings, GTC! I am Beth Trenor, Corporate Shield Captain for the Milliken team since 2013. Milliken is a privately-owned company based in Spartanburg, SC where our corporate and research headquarters are located with approximately 7000 associates world-wide. We are a diverse manufacturing company that supplies floor coverings, specialty textiles, and chemicals globally.

I have been with Milliken for almost 14 years, and I credit Milliken with giving me the “running bug” in 2009 when I participated in an associate-lead Couch-to-5k program. I had never run more than a mile or two in my life, and that year decided to take on the challenge to work towards the Milliken Earth Run 5k. Since then I have completed 5 full marathons, one 50k trail race, and dozens of half-marathons & other races.

I’ve also been part of the Earth Run organizing team for past 8 years and worked to help promote the event to our internal associates. One of the biggest boosts for our “home-team” participation was to make a strong push of company communications not only within our corporate campus (where the race is held), but to other manufacturing locations in the area. We worked with the Human Resources contacts at each plant to get the word out about the event and ensure everyone knew how to sign up to participate or volunteer. We also offered support and guidance (and in some years had training groups) for those interested in a Couch-to-5k program.

Corporate Shield was previously a stand-alone group where you just had to “know somebody” to get put on the team email list. Now, we’ve been incorporated into our company’s Wellness Network which has both raised the visibility and triggered greater financial sponsorship of the CS program, so we’ve gotten stronger participation in recent years for all of the CS events. Between race fee sponsorship and getting team singlets & t-shirts, the participants have really started to feel a greater sense of camaraderie.

We’ve also made a few little changes over the years... One has been to let associates know that everyone (runners, walkers, and volunteers) earns points for the team, and nobody can “hurt” the team based on their pace. We’ve also been careful to communicate about “events” instead of “races” since some mentioned the word “race” was intimidating to less-experienced participants. It’s amazing what some small changes can do to encourage more people to join!



Sarah Schoonover, your GTC Corporate Shield Race Director, manages our GTC Corporate Shield races and corporate sponsorship participation.



GREEN VALLEY

By John Lehman



Green Valley...a day for the record books, not because of the speed of the runners, although many did fabulously, but a GVRR like none other that I can recall! Past Green Valleys have been run in challenging weather conditions. This one was no exception. 37 degrees and raining, yet no one's spirits were dampened in the least! We may not have had the same turnout as if the weather would have been perfect, but runners showed up, even on the COVID-altered course, and ran hard and long!

One of the giveaways was a commemorative buff (a scarf/neck gaiter), with both the Greenville Track Club and Hampton Park Baptist Church's logos, along with the Green Valley Road Race logo.

It did take quite a while to map out a course that both races could encompass, but once done, it made for a great competitive day!

Green Valley always directs one toward a tough course, whether it was run through the Green Valley country course from Furman or Trailblazer Park, or from the campus of Hampton Park. But, like anything hard, it gives one the satisfaction that they prepared well for a tough day, and the completion of such a goal always leaves one feeling energized and encouraged!

I think one of the highlights of the race was that it was finally in-person. Last year's GVRR was the last time until now that one of our major events was able to be run that way. We did have a staggered start, and runners were cautious while indoors, but otherwise, the race had the same friendly, yet competitive, atmosphere, as before...finally!

After nearly a year of profoundly altered circumstances, this will be a Green Valley that will not long be forgotten!

THE GTC RUNNING SERIES

By Mike Burchett
Running Series Director

GREEN VALLEY 5M

The 2021 standings for the GTC Running Series are up to date on the club website (www.greenvilletrackclub.com). Our last race was the Green Valley Road Race, and the next one on the Calendar is the Freedom Flyer 5k in May. Remember that each participant gets a minimum of 10 points for each race finished. Finishing 5 races without placing earns you the same amount of points as winning your age group in one race; so there is value in showing up for as many races as possible!

If you placed in the top three of your age group in 2020 and have not yet received your award e-mail, you should be getting that very soon. First place age-group finishers will receive a FREE entry to a GTC race, second-place finishers will receive \$20 off, and third-place finishers will receive \$10 off. The codes will be in the e-mails. Guard them with your lives (just kidding...sorta). You will also receive a personalized, printable PDF certificate in the e-mail.

If you are an active GTC member, you are automatically entered in the Points Series. All you have to do is show up and run! If you have any questions regarding the series, direct them to postmaster@greenvilletrackclub.com and I will be happy to answer them for you.



TRACK & FIELD IN THE TIME OF COVID

THE EASTSIDE EXPERIENCE

By Ed Boehmke

A track meet is like a road race. Race directors in our club will understand that the success of a race is all determined by the preparation before the race even happens. Ordering your awards, getting people to help in various places and times, working with outside agencies for security. And many other things, that even with experience, can become a heavy burden on the race director. Unless you have been a race director, you will not understand the organization and preparation involved. These people are the lifeblood of our club, all of which deserve our utmost appreciation. The pandemic did not make our races easier, only gave our race directors more things to consider and do.

High School track and Field (and Cross Country last fall is no different. Unless you have been the meet director for a Track Meet, most people have no idea of the work and preparation that is involved in making the meet successful. I have been the race director for a few GTC events – Greer Road Race (half-marathon and 5K) and the Greenville News Run Downtown 5K (Kerrie Sijon did most of the work) and

I can say that the details in both are of the utmost importance and each offers unique challenges.

Unlike road races, track events at least have their own facility. There is no need for us to monitor vehicle traffic (but we do foot traffic). Our competitors are spread out over 18 events for both genders. A track meet usually starts around 9:00 in the morning and can extend well into the afternoon. Some of the very large meets may go into the evening or be spread out to two days. It is essential that each of our events start on time so that there is no dead time between the events (like waiting for the awards at road races) and our spectators and athletes know when things are happening.

The organization of Track and Field Meets is an incredible endeavor in a “normal” year. The COVID-19 pandemic and protocols presented to us have changed the entire landscape and has made the organization and subsequent meet itself a meet directors nightmare.

In a “normal” year, the organization of a track and field meet begins a year before by setting a date for the meet. Like most athletic events, the date usually stays the same weekend every year. After last year was cancelled, I set the date for this year’s meets, but then, in September, the South Carolina High School League pushed our State Championships later by one week, which then changed the calendar for almost every meet.

With new dates set, I then had to face the challenges of our school district. In January, Greenville County Schools told all of the Athletic Directors that track meets had to be restricted to 500 athletes and no more than 5 schools in attendance at the same time. This put us in a turmoil because every meet that we host has at least 1000 athletes and 16 to 30 teams. I talked with the District Athletic Director and he said that the restrictions were for regular meets during the week when schools would ultimately bring their entire team to a meet. With many teams in Greenville of 100 or more, this would quickly cause a problem. The district was concerned (and rightly so) that track meets are very social events among the athletes and the athletes have a lot of free time to mix with their competitors as well as their own teammates. He then asked me to come up with a plan for our big meets and show how we would attempt to keep teams, athletes and spectators away from each other.

Here is what we came up with.

FOR ALL MEETS

- Spectators and athletes enter by different gates.
- Spectators must remain in the home stands (with a couple of exceptions) and sell a limited number of tickets.
- The athletes are assigned a seating area in the visitors stands or on the infield of the track. Athletes are not allowed on the home side.
- Social distancing marks for athletes waiting to get on the track or to make an attempt at a field event.
- Mask MUST be worn by all. Athletes can remove them only when actively warming up or competing in an event.
- Sanitizer at all field events. Pole Vault and High Jump mats were to be sprayed af-ter each jump.
- Athletes are to leave the stadium and go home after they have completed their last event of the day.



TRACK & FIELD IN THE TIME OF COVID, PAGE 2

FOR SPECIFIC MEETS

Hickman Relays (March 6)

- Limited the number of relays per school to one. Previously each school could enter two teams in the sprint relays, 4 in the distance relays, and 3 in the field relays.

Chick fil-a Games (March 13)

- Limit the number of schools to 20. Last year (the last track meet in the state) we had 33 schools.
- Limit the number of individuals per event to 2. Last year it was 3.
- Limit the number of relay teams to 1. Last year it was 2.

Kevin Logan Memorial JV Meet (March 20)

- Split the meet into two days.
- Limit the number of schools to 16. Two years ago we had 20.

Greenville County JV Meet (April 17)

- Split the meet into two days. Which we changed to one day and spread it out.)

Greenville County Varsity Meet (April 28-30)

- Split the meet into 3 days. Previously 2 days
- Divide the schools into two divisions Previously only 1 division.
- Limit the number of entries per event to 2. Previously 3.

This was the plan we presented to the superintendent and he approved. We made all of the necessary changes to our meet information and sent it out. I had a zoom meeting with all of the County Track Coaches and explained what we had to do at Eastside and what they had to do as a coach and a team for us to have a season. A few of the large meets across the state got cancelled in February and made us wonder if the district would make us do the same. One large meet that Hillcrest was going to host was moved to Seneca because it would have had too many teams. Thankfully, our district is committed to all activities for our students and allowed us to continue with our plans.

Because of all the athletes from a lot of different schools, the precautions we are taking may be a little overboard but extremely necessary. In a team sport, if someone tests positive just after a contest, there are only two schools involved that may have to be shut down for 10-14 days for quarantine. But in track many teams or parts of teams may be shut down. As an example, in the shot put we will usually have 20 to 50 competitors. To keep things smaller, we divide the group into groups

called flights. Before COVID, a flight would have around 18 athletes. Now we have reduced that down to 10-12. It takes a little longer with more flights because you have to give the next flight time to warm up before they compete. If one of the competitors test positive for COVID, then it is possible to have to quarantine all of the competitors in the flight. Those athletes travel to other events and into their team camps. We have made marks near the jumping and throwing areas for the athletes to stand and wait their turn (like you see in all stores now). This keeps them apart. We don't let flights mingle with each other. And if the team areas are monitored by the coaches, then the team members are away from each other. The contact tracing becomes very minimal because of our efforts.

So far, all of our plans have been successful. Not once have I been called to discuss the possibility of Covid-19 at one of our meets. The season still has a few weeks to go, but if we can remain diligent with all of the protocols we have established and take those same protocols to other meets around the state, then I feel very confident that we can finish the high school track season with a successful State Championships week in late May.

A meet has to have a time schedule, a timer, and many officials. Luckily, all of the coaches that wanted to come to Eastside to have a meet have jumped in and helped in all of the capacities that they were needed on the day of the meet.

But COVID forced us to design areas for each team to set up their "team camp." If any of you have been to large track meets, the first thing you will notice is all of the tents that are all over the stadium. This year we asked teams NOT to bring tents because the athletes want to sit under them. A 10'x10' tent will only hold 4-5 athletes that are socially distanced and a team of 25-50 cannot sit under one. Each team still had to have a place to set up, have room to be socially distant and be away from other schools. We divided the football field into 22 areas that are 36'x36' which we felt was large enough to accommodate the athletes that were not presently competing. I assigned each school an area and sent that to them with all of the other protocols that we were following.

We had to hire extra security for all of the meets. Their job was to keep the spectators in the home stands and in the extra areas that we have assigned for them to watch specific field events. Of course, we were often on the PA system asking people to follow all of our protocols.

Ed was the Head Boys and Girls Track and Cross Country Coach at Eastside High School for 38 years. His teams won three state championships, seven state runner-ups, and numerous region championships. He has been the Meet Director for the Coaches Classic, S.C. State Championships, and the Chick-fil-a Games, as well the Greenville County Cross Country Championships and the Greenville County Track and Field Championships, in which he started the girls' division in 1977. He has also hosted state and regional Junior Olympics in both track and cross-country. He is very active in the S.C. State and Cross Country Coaches Association having held every elected and appointed position in the organization, including serving as President from 1988 - 1992. He is also very active in the Greenville Track Club having been a member since the middle 1970's. He has helped with many road races including race director for the Greer Earth Day Runs and co-race director for the Greenville News Run Downtown Race. He has worked with many of the GTC All-Comers Meets and the GTC SC Masters Track and Field Meet. He is a current board member serving as an At-Large member. He has been selected to five different Hall-of-Fames – Berea High School Athletic, USATF/S.C., Greenville Track Club, S.C. Track and Cross Country Coaches Association, and the S.C. Athletic Coaches Association. He retired from teaching in June of 2016 but still continues to be a meet director at Eastside, hosting some of the largest meets in South Carolina. This year marks the 45th straight year he has directed the Greenville County Championships.



“MEMBERS’ VOICES”

From interviews conducted by the GTC Newsletter editor

ANY TIPS FOR THE REST OF US?

Your Newsletter editor interviewed runners at some of the virtual events sponsored by GTC in the past months. Among his questions was this one: “Any tips for the rest of us?” Below are some of the responses.

ANGELA HECK



“Before I race any distance, I think about what I know I can definitely pace at for ex-tended periods, and then I just try to ebb and flow at the top of each mile back and forth in between that anticipated threshold. Being new to the 10k distance and really, racing in general, I wanted to weave in a bit of a breather to better understand my true threshold. This morning my goal was seven and a half minutes per mile, so, I worked in a ‘break’ of sorts of twenty seconds on either side. For me, running is a mix of mental and physical effort - mental often being the most demanding. If I felt like I was fatiguing, I’d give myself a 20 second ‘break’ and adjust to a 7:50 pace. Then, as I regained my toughness, I would dial it up 20 seconds beyond to 7:10; for balance. Even if I do not take the break, my brain knows it can, that it is built in and available. Sometimes, that option is all we need, right?”

[I do that] with my stride and my posture. So when I decide to go faster, I obviously stand a little bit more erect and my abs go just a wee bit tighter. At this point, I focus on my turnover; trying to up my steps while also lengthening my stride.

This is when I’m striving for faster. And when I’m slower, I think my shoulders, well, I just allow them to get a little ‘spaghetti’. At this point I have a shorter stride, my arms are pumping a bit less, and my turnover is not as rapid. Just a quick 20 seconds of ‘spaghetti’ to essentially reset my mind.”

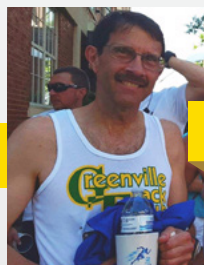
Angela Heck, Easley

“They always say in the running industry: Don’t change schedule or how you’ve been training for a run like that. Just keep running. don’t put on a brand new pair of sneakers or start a new regimen of vitamins, etc.

I’ve seen some hard core runners in freezing temperatures in a tank top, shorts, no gloves. And they are just shaking! I’ve been in the military and you’d better wear enough but not so little you’re standing around and freezing.

[On the other hand,] I’ve been at Disney doing the Dopey Challenge. The amount of clothes just slung along the entire place! They just donate that to Good Will. Brand new stuff with tags!”

“Before race day, I actually do a hill repeat workout during the week. I do a tempo run when I’m training for a half. When I come to a hill, if I’m training properly it’s not such a daunting task. I increase my foot cadence and get up (the hill) with strength rather than just plodding along. I sometimes may burn out going up the hills, and when I come to the flat it’s harder to recover. It’s a balance. That’s the joy of doing a race where you live: you can do the course beforehand and build that knowlege into your calculations.”



MIKE SULLIVAN

“I try to run pretty upright. There is a program called Chi Running, that espouses fairly short strides, and not so much on your toes, but on your midfoot rather than your heel. And I’ve been doing that for about 10 years and it’s worked pretty well for me.

[When I go up hills] I try to pull my shoulders and arms back a bit. I’m still upright, but I’m not trying to fall into the hill, and maybe a little more on my toes and midfoot. And I just try to stay upright. It’s an opportunity to increase your pace a bit, because the hill is coming to your foot.

Same thing [running downhill]. I’m trying to quicken my pace. I can’t keep on my toes because I’d be leaning too far forward, so I try to still stay upright and quicken my pace and try not to ‘brake’ with my heels. That hurts my heels. I also wear a lighter shoe these days with a 4 mm drop. That combination works well for me.”

Mike Sullivan, Simpsonville

What’s worked for you? Let other readers know at newsletter@greenvilletrackclub.com.

SPLITS: TEMPO RUNS & THE TRAINING EFFECT

By Bill Blask



How can we run faster? A simple but central question. I had an idea recently.

Tempo runs — walking or running faster than usual for a given duration — are one way we train to go faster, before we fasten the bib and line up. It takes time and effort for that training tool to have positive effects, unless ...

Why not skip the training runs and just throw in a few Tempo Run speed spurts during a race and get faster race times? Call it a ‘training-avoidance’ strategy!

What’s the catch? This training short-cut requires that you can recover quick enough to keep your usual race pace afterwards. This ‘get quick cheap’ strategy depends on one thing: our capacity for recovery.

A training effect.

AN EXPERIMENT

I decided I might test this strategy using only a single training run. I’d make believe it is a race (run it at race pace), and examine the resulting data: the splits. (What else?) Here’s how I did it, and what I learned.

When and How: In March, I ran a training run of 6.05 miles. During that run, after my warm-up in mile 1, I ran the remaining miles as though I was racing a 5K or 10K at my 12+ average pace. I inserted two 4 minute hard tempo runs in miles 2 and 4. I would recover from each as I would in an actual race, as I continued to run. At least, that was the plan.

Where and Why: I chose the Doodle Trail in Easley, right down the road from me. It has no severe hills to add stress to an otherwise even pace. Perfect for seeing the effect of those 4 minute Tempo Runs.

MY SPLITS

My splits were 13:14, 12:12, 14:16, 12:17, 13:58, 13:01. Mile 1 (13:14) was my warmup, mile 2 (12:12) had my first two tempo runs, mile 3 (14:16) was recovery, mile 4 (12:17) had the second two tempo runs, mile 5 (13:58) was recovery, and mile 6 (13:01) was my final mile to get me home.

THE RESULTS

The split times for each mile show the effect of my Tempo Runs.

- In miles 2 and 4 containing the Tempo Runs the overall mile time was my average 5K/10K mile time. No gain from the Tempo spurts.
- The ‘recovery’ miles after those containing the Tempo Runs were slower than my normal 5K/10K mile race pace.

WHAT HAPPENED

I was disappointed. Sure, I was tired and still breathing fairly hard after each Tempo Run. (They turned out to be more like sprints.) The two tempo runs in miles 2 and 4 were a total of 8 minutes out of my usual 12-13 minutes mile time. In spite of all that speed it took me the remainder of the Tempo Run mile plus the following mile to re-cover. And then I came back slower than my usual race times.

Simply, I wasn’t able to keep the speed gains afterwards without sacrificing my usual race pace. My capacity for recovery wasn’t up to the challenge.

WHAT I LEARNED

My ‘training-avoidance’ strategy didn’t work for me. Just dropping in faster-paced Tempo Runs to a normal race-paced run did not produce a faster mile pace. Instead, just the opposite.

I had to face the hard truth: it takes time and effort to improve. To produce a more efficient stride, or a faster cadence, or improved cardiovascular endurance, or even one’s capacity for recovery. All factors in a faster race time.

THE TAKEAWAY

That is what training is, isn’t it. We stress ourselves to discover untapped resources. We have to put in — there it is again — time and effort. To have a curiosity and interest in seeing what improvements are possible for us. Just throwing in a technique during a race is pot-luck at best.

But Hey! We are eternal dreamers. Maybe you will be the one to find a better way. Be sure to tell the rest of us.

See you on the road.

“More Tempo training runs? I’m not complaining, Coach, but I have a better idea.”

