Middle School Cross Country

By: Heather Baker

Building a team oriented quality program

“If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader.” -John Quincy Adams

Building a community of runners

- Why do you coach?
- Engage your runners in the “why” for each of them
- Build them as a person
  - Perseverance
  - Hard work
  - Putting others first
  - Team work
- Positivity

Who can participate

- Someone who knows nothing about running
- A runner who has a friend who is interested in running
- Someone who has run in a running club
- Someone who has a parent who runs
- Middle School Cross country does not discriminate

How do I build a team?

“Far more coaches fail to achieve success because they lack ability to develop team culture rather than because they lack good direction or knowledge of the game.” -Anonymous

- Two aspects of a team:
  - Individual
  - Team

Individual aspect of a team

- Know their “why”
- Get to know them on a personal level
- Set their own goals
    - Goal sheets
        - 3 goals for running
        - 1 goal in another area

“Good teams become great ones when the members trust each other enough to surrender the ‘me’ for the ‘we’. ”

-Phil Jackson

Team aspect of a team

- Everyone working towards a common goal
    - What is the goal?
    - How do we achieve it?
- Team building
    - Pasta parties
    - Scavenger hunts
- Team Leaders
        - Former runners
        - Expectations are known and shared
        - Lead by example
        - Show new runners what to do
        - Everyone is held to a high standard

“Leaders must be close enough to relate to others, but far enough ahead to motivate them.”

-John C. Maxwell

Meet Motivation

- Team warm-ups
  - Select a leader for each race
  - Given times to perform each part of the warm-up
- Race ready
  - Meet each team at the starting line
  - Share any important information
  - Race quote
- Team support
  - Everyone stays to cheer for each teammate
  - Building team unity
- Team cool downs
  - Team race leader in charge of cool down as a team

Middle school training program

“Most people get excited about games, but I’ve got to be excited about practice, because that’s my classroom.” -Pat Summitt

- **Three main parts to training**
  - **Mechanics**
  - **Strength**
  - **Running**

Mechanics

- Know the “why”
    - Prevent injury
    - Improve speed
- Teach the “how”
    - Must teach proper technique to begin
    - Begin with quality over quantity
    - Seek out local programs to help teach the “how”

Mechanics

- Running specific techniques
  - **A-skips**-skip such that the heel of the front leg is just in front of the opposite shin with the ankle pulled up
  - **Bounding**-complete over-sized strides spending extra time in the air. Hold proper running form and cover as much distance as possible
  - **Ankle flips**-Complete forward running keeping knees locked and using ankles to propel forward
  - **Seated arm swings**-start in sitting position with legs extended in front and knees bent to 90 degrees. Keeping upright posture, practice swinging arms. Hands should not cross the midline and elbows should not go above chest height.

Strength Training

- Know the “why”
  - Speed
  - Endurance
  - Proper mechanics
- Teach the “how”
  - Only use body weight
  - Reps done on hard days
  - Teach quality first then increase quantity

Strength Training

Running specific strengthening

- **Crossover touch**-balance on one leg. Squat with weight through the heel and use opposite hand to touch outside of foot
- **Body weight squats**-start with feet shoulder width and toes slightly rotated out. Squat through heels keeping chest up and return
- **Reverse Lunge**-Stride backwards into lunge keeping weight on the heel of the front leg (distance should be two fist widths between heel of front leg and knee of back leg)
- **Calf raises**-Rise up as high as possible on toes and return
- **Mountain climbers**-Start in push up position. Bring feet up in alternating climbing motion maintaining spine in straight position

Running

- Mix of intensity and volume
- Gradual increase of both
- VO2 Max
    - Measure of aerobic fitness level
    - Body's capacity for consuming oxygen
- Timed mile run to measure current fitness level
- Train at the current level--not where you want to be or where you were
- Grouped workouts
    - Based on current level
    - Ensures reach runner gets the proper training

Running

- Four types of training
    - Distance/recovery
    - Tempo
    - Intervals
    - Repetitions
- Know the “why” for each type of training
    - Teach your runners
    - If they know the “why” they will buy into each workout and perform it more effectively which will produce more results

Distance/Recovery

- “Why”?
    - Boosts aerobic capacity
    - Helps the body to learn to keep proper technique and mechanics when tired
    - Increases blood circulation which helps the body process waste products
    - Builds confidence in maintaining a pace even when tired
- Majority of miles for the week-60-70% of the weekly mileage
- Follows a difficult day’s workout

Tempo/Threshold run

- “Why”?
    - Improves a runner’s anaerobic threshold
    - Builds speed and strength
    - Improves endurance
- The pace is about 30 seconds slower than 5k pace
- Usually no more than 20 to 25 minutes
- Can be run as a longer run with the threshold intervals mixed in
    - If run as such, it can teach younger runners to change up their pace in the middle of a race
- Should be about 15% of weekly miles

Intervals

- “Why”?
    - Builds your VO2 Max (maximum rate of oxygen consumption)
    - Running at a fast pace with an incomplete recovery
    - Builds muscle strength
- Running a little faster than 5K pace with half to equal the rest
- Working on mechanics while reaching your VO2 max
- Should be about 8% of the weekly mileage

Repetitions

- “Why”?
    - Teaches your body to run quickly without building up the lactic acid or fatigue
    - Improves power and speed
- Repetitions are repeated runs at mile race pace or slightly faster
- The rest is double the repetition to allow for the lactic acid to subside
- Should be about 5% of the weekly mileage

Running

What is the optimal training for the maximum benefit while preventing injury?

- Look at the duration of the activity and level of intensity of the activity
- Borg rating for each runner/activity
- Use the units (mileage x intensity)
    - To find the Borg rating you divide the total of units for the current week by the average of the previous 4 weeks
- Optimal percentage is between .8 and 1.3
- Most benefit without overtraining or undertraining

Training Log Entry

Color	Borg RPE	Explanation/Perceived Exertion
Green	6 7 8	No exertion at all Extremely Light La, la, la… This is easy
Yellow	9 10 11 12	Very Light (easy walking at a comfortable pace) This is the effort level where you can't hear your breathing You are able to easily talk and you can run here for a long time Light, but building aerobic endurance
Orange	13 14 15 16	Somewhat hard (It is quite an effort; you feel tired but can continue) You start to hear your breathing, not gasping for air You can talk, but more challenging, use one or two word answers Hard. This is considered your steady state
Red	17 18 19 20	Very hard (very strenuous,you are very fatigued) ANAEROBIC THRESHOLD Breathing is vigorous. You can't talk, and you're reaching for air Extremely hard (you're counting minutes or seconds until it ends) Maximal Effort

	ianiya Mathew	Date	Duration	Level of Intensity	Units	Rolling Week	Rolling 4 Week	Acute to Chronic
2		Tuesday, June 26, 2018	24	11	264	264	2026	
3		Wednesday, June 27, 201	20	15	300	564	2026	
4		Thursday, June 28, 2018	24	11	264	828	2026	
5		Friday, June 29, 2018	20	16	320	1148	2026	
6		Saturday, June 30, 2018	20	10	200	1348	2026	
7		Sunday, July 1, 2018	30	14	420	1768	2026	
8		Monday, July 2, 2018	15	15	225	1993	2026	
9		Tuesday, July 3, 2018	26	13	338	2067	2026	
10		Wednesday, July 4, 2018	15	15	225	1992	2026	
11		Thursday, July 5, 2018	26	11	286	2014	2026	
12		Friday, July 6, 2018	20	16	320	2014	2026	
13		Saturday, July 7, 2018	31	15	465	2279	2026	
14		Sunday, July 8, 2018	0	6	0	1859	2026	
15		Monday, July 9, 2018	20	15	300	1934	2026	
16		Tuesday, July 10, 2018	26	15	390	1986	2026	
17		Wednesday, July 11, 201	28	16	448	2209	2026	
18		Thursday, July 12, 2018	26	15	390	2313	2026	
19		Friday, July 13, 2018	20	16	320	2313	2026	
20		Saturday, July 14, 2018	0	6	0	1848	2026	
21		Sunday, July 15, 2018	45	13	585	2433	2026	
22		Monday, July 16, 2018	20	15	300	2433	2026	
23		Tuesday, July 17, 2018	28	13	364	2407	2026	
24		Wednesday, July 18, 201	15	15	225	2184	2026	
25		Thursday, July 19, 2018	28	11	308	2102	2026	
26		Friday, July 20, 2018	20	10	200	1982	2026	
27		Saturday, July 21, 2018	30	16	480	2462	2026	
28		Sunday, July 22, 2018	0	6	0	1877	2026	
29		Monday, July 23, 2018	15	11	165	1742	2026	0.86
30		Tuesday, July 24, 2018	30	13	390	1768	2057	0.86
31		Wednesday, July 25, 201	15	14	210	1753	2035	0.86
32		Thursday, July 26, 2018	30	13	390	1835	2066	0.89
33		Friday, July 27, 2018	15	14	210	1845	2039	0.91
34		Saturday, July 28, 2018	0	6	0	1365	1989	0.69
35		Sunday, July 29, 2018	20	17	340	1705	1969	0.87
36		Monday, July 30, 2018	20	14	280	1820	1982	0.92
37		Tuesday, July 31, 2018	10	15	150	1580	1935	0.82
38		Wednesday, August 1, 2018	25	12	300	1670	1954	0.85
39		Thursday, August 2, 2018	20	12	240	1520	1943	0.78
40		Friday, August 3, 2018	30	11	330	1640	1945	0.84
41		Saturday, August 4, 2018	0	6	0	1640	1829	0.90
42		Sunday, August 5, 2018	50	12	600	1900	1979	0.96
43		Monday, August 6, 2018	20	12	240	1860	1964	0.95
44		Tuesday, August 7, 2018	40	12	480	2190	1986	1.10
45		Wednesday, August 8, 2018	24	13	312	2202	1952	1.13
46		Wednesday, August 8, 2018	30	11	330	2292	1937	1.18
47		Friday, August 10, 2018	24	14	336	2298	1941	1.18
48		Sunday, August 12, 2018	31	11	341	2639	2027	1.30
49		Monday, August 13, 2018	40	11	440	2479	1990	1.25
50		Tuesday, August 14, 2018	12	13	156	2395	1954	1.23
51		Wednesday, August 15, 201	20	10	200	2115	1913	1.11
52		Thursday, August 16, 2018	12.28	16	196	1999	1906	1.05
53		Friday, August 17, 2018	25	11	275	1944	1898	1.02
54		Sunday, August 19, 2018	30	12	360	1968	1938	1.02
55		Monday, August 20, 2018	40	12	480	2107	1938	1.09
56		Tuesday, August 21, 2018	12.51	17	213	1880	1991	0.94
57		Wednesday, August 22, 201	30	11	330	2054	2032	1.01
58		Thursday, August 23, 2018	12.02	18	216	2071	1989	1.04

Borg rating graph

Make a Plan

- Plan your season
  - Mechanics, strength, training, and racing
- Look at the entire season start to finish
- Parts of a season
  - Phase 1-building a base and preventing injury
  - Phase 2-adding mileage, repetitions, and threshold training
    - Working on pacing
  - Phase 3-adding interval training
    - Working on speed and pick-ups through races
  - Phase 4-decreasing mileage in preparation for the culminating races of the season

Know your runners

- Use the Borg Scale
  - Alterations in Borg ratings can mean illness or injury
- Listen to your runners
- Know their extra sports and extra-curricular activities
- Be aware of their home and school life

Know your “Why”

- What is your inspiration for coaching?
- Set up your program to work for you and your team
  - Use the best parts of successful programs
  - Adapt them to meet the needs of your program
- A successful program is only partly made up of knowledge, but is highly successful because of the connections you make with your runners

“The mediocre teacher tells. The good teacher explains. The superior teacher demonstrates. The great teacher inspires.”

-William Arthur Ward