

A VERY PEDESTRIAN SUBJECT – RACE WALK NOTES - George White

TRAINING FOR ENDURANCE

All endurance training is based on the concept of stressing the body and then allowing recovery and muscle rebuild/adaptation. There are many physiological changes that endurance training aims to stimulate, but basically it is to allow you to keep going for long times or distances. There are two components of endurance training – total weekly distance and a specific long walk. The bulk of the weekly distance will come from other sorts of training but ideally the long walk should make up about 20-30% of your total weekly distance. Tempo training covered under Speed training can be used to improve endurance training. Training at near race speeds helps lift the aerobic/anaerobic threshold, meaning your endurance can improve further.

FOR SPEED

Once basic endurance is established, speed work can be incorporated into your training routine.

Racing by definition necessitates going fast, which in turn means that you should do some fast training. There are many subtle variations of speed training – Anaerobic, Lactic threshold, VO2 max and tempo etc., but basically you just have to go fast. In concept walk speed training is no different to running (refer to Peter Sandery's articles); they all involve training over short (relative to a proposed race) distances and may be repeats or "ladders". Other than for tempo walks all other speed training will be at faster than race pace.

Tempo walks are basically at a speed similar to your race pace and for most; our weekly races are your tempo walks. To avoid reducing your ability to walk distance, one speed and one tempo walk per week should be the maximum.

Always do a warm-up before and a warm-down after a speed session.

FOR STRENGTH

If you only run or race walk you will probably get weaker over time. A strong body must improve your capacity to run or walk well. Heavy weights for strength and lighter weights for endurance are both worthwhile. Using weights for upper body and lower body is important but do not ignore your "core". The abs and lower back are vital in stabilising the whole body.

WALKING DRILLS

To assist in technique development the following drills could be built into training sessions. Each drill should be executed over 50 to 100m.

Foot Roll

To maximise stride length and avoid bent knees, concentrate on the rolling action of the foot. Ensure the lead foot makes contact with the ground right on the heel with the toe high. Roll the foot as the bodyweight passes over it and continue to push off strongly from the toe. Keep the toe on the ground as long as possible by extending the foot away from the leg.

Leg Straightening

For walkers with bent knee problems. At moderate speed, emphasise straightening the leg as soon as the heel touches and keep straight longer than normal as it propels the body forward.

Quick Steps

This builds speed, turnover and reduces overstriding. Just walk fast with short steps. To help keep steps short, hold your hands behind your back. This is also useful as the last part of a warm-up

Heel Walking

This helps bent knees and walkers that land with the foot rather flat. Walk short distances just on the heels with toes held high, emphasising straight leg support.

Cross Over

To increase hip flexibility walk slowly with medium strides and by rotating the hips, place the right foot to the left side and the left foot to the right side of a straight line. An advanced version of this is to clasp the hands in front of the body at chest height and move the arms to the right and left in unison with movement of the hips.

Figure 8's

Walk with very short strides in a tight figure 8. This helps with those tight turns and a quicker turnover.

Long Arms

Walk at moderate speed with straight arms, palms down. This helps you concentrate on pushing off with the tips of the rear toe, stretches the groin and opens the hips.

Windmill

For shoulder flexibility and coordination between hips and shoulders. Walk with medium strides while rotating one arm up and over backwards. Alternate arms and also use both arms together.

Hip Flexibility

To improve the hip flexibility and hip drop, stand with both legs together but with one foot on a block or step and the other flat on the ground with a straight knee. Do the same for the other side. As the hip becomes more flexible, increase the block/step height to improve the hip drop further.