

Best training methods? I like to train by time, not by miles

By Charles Clines



Back in the days when I was running decent enough to compete in my age division, I tried several training methods that I would either read in Runner's World or in a book.

What I found is that there never was a training schedule that seemed to have the workouts that would benefit me. Well, they would help, but I never seemed to progress to the level I thought I could achieve.

So, what I began doing was taking a training schedule that had several things I liked and then tweaking it to fit what worked best for me. That, to me, is how all training schedules should be -- made for the individual runner. Cookie-cutter training schedules will probably help anyone improve, but maybe not bring about the best results.

Unless you have a coach, then most runners will have to concoct their own training schedule. And what works for one runner might not work for another.

What worked best for me was to forget about running so many miles during a workout, but run by time. In other words, rather than go out for a 5-mile run, I'd go out for a 40-minute run. Whether I went 5, 5-plus or less than 5 didn't really matter. I was getting in 40 minutes of running. This worked particularly well on long runs. I didn't have to worry about keep track of miles because I would go out for an hour to two-hour run. So, if I didn't feel particularly peppy, I might not go as far as I would if I were feeling energetic. But I still got in the required time.

I found this also worked well with tempo runs, which I believe are one of the best ways to increase speed and stamina. After warming up for about 20 minutes with a slow jog, I'd run a tempo run of, say 30 minutes, and then cool down another 20-minute slow jog. Again, I could guess the distance I was running because I was running a course that I had measured.

But distance didn't matter. I was testing the theory of running by time rather than by miles, and I liked it better and it seemed to work better.

Even hill training was based on time. I found a nice incline that I could reach the top in about a minute and a half. That was the recommended time for each hill repetition. Run up and jog slowly down. This was done after warming up for about 20 minutes. After the hill repeats, I'd cool off for about 20 minutes with a slow jog.

I also tried using a heart rate monitor for training, but as I've written here before, I didn't have a lot of luck with it. It worked up to a point. But during the summers, it was very difficult to adjust the recommended heart rate because the hotter temperatures would have my heart rate at a high rate in just a few minutes. Thus, my slower runs were indeed sloooow.

Unfortunately, I lost my training schedule when I was clearing out running magazines and can't remember the daily regimens. Because I'm older, the schedule would need revising anyway. I'm trying to reconstruct the schedule, but I know that it will be based on time and not miles. That way, it won't be quite as discouraging after running for 40 minutes and knowing that I'm still a long way from

finishing 5 miles. Also, if I do begin training by distance again, it will be in kilometers and not miles because I still believe races such as 5Ks and 10Ks should be marked that way and not in miles.

So, what training method do you use? If you have some suggestions, then send them to me. I'm open for anything. I have discovered what doesn't work....watching a lot of TV and playing the Wii with my grandkids. But the Wii is more fun.