

Thirteen Coaching Tips

By Marc Evans

1. Do ALL of your over distance workouts with "slower" athletes. I've never seen a "group workout" that is easy. Over distance training have specific physiological and biological benefits, which are NOT trained at higher intensities. When doing longer workouts train your technique by doing drills and simply working on your base aerobic conditioning. Lastly, when you get passed by another athlete while doing your long distance training...Let em go!
2. Don't take more than a few days off from training. NEVER "shut down" intentionally for more than 2 weeks. Deconditioning can be a "bad deal" for an endurance athlete. Instead, workout even if just for 15 to 20 minutes a day and you'll at least maintain your aerobic fitness. If not, you'll risk losing a lot of hard work and it'll take months to regain.
3. Change the courses in training you use regularly. Do become familiar with other places to train, as this will keep the mind fresh.
4. In the "off season" do some different activities and work on your weaknesses. Ski, roller blade, skate, track ski, hike, climb, mountain bike.....lifts weights.
5. Do follow a sound nutrition plan for optimal health. Don't change how you eat too radically and especially DON'T get caught up in the hype of falsely claimed and misleading promises. If you think sports drink, energy bar, vitamin or even more protein and less carbohydrates are going to make you a better athlete without training.....well, we need to talk.
6. Train and compete for the "right" reasons. That is, do it for YOU and not to beat someone else or for egotistical motives. Trying to overcome another athlete ONLY gives your mental energy away...stay within yourself and you'll have a much better performance.
7. Trust your perceived exertion. That is, your mental awareness of how hard you are working. If you use a heart rate monitor and your cardiac output increases there is a subsequent decrease in the resting pulse. So, using the same HR for training and competition might be wrong. You may just have another reserve of intensity not being used...wouldn't this be unfortunate to know you could have finished much sooner. On the other hand, perceived exertion will help keep you at the right intensity when hydration, energy stores and environments change.
8. If injured, STOP! When it hurts, STOP! Seek qualified professional medical treatment as soon as possible. DO NOT get caught in the spiral of a chronic injury by not taking the right steps. A lifetime of fitness could be at risk for a few moments of adrenaline from training.
9. Vary the duration of your over distance training in periodic cycles. If you're a triathlete don't overlook the importance of an over distance swim too.
10. Visualize what a competition will feel like to the muscles. Think about different scenarios, situations and outcomes that may present themselves. For example,

go over in your mind how you'll react and feel when leading an event when suddenly, you get a flat tire, your running shoe laces come off or kick in the stomach at the start of a swim. What does this feel like and how will you respond? Also, rehearse positive outcomes as well, such as a great start, smooth transitions and effortless running.

11. Drink plenty of fluids, but not so much that you cannot absorb them into the bloodstream. Slowing down while competing too much can put an athlete at risk of developing hyponatremia. This is a serious condition where fluid absorption stops. What happens when the athlete continues to drink "bloating" occurs and results in low blood sodium levels. As an athlete sweats more sodium is lost making the condition worse. Thus, a decrease of fluid to the working muscles and increase in body temperature. None are good conditions for any athlete especially the endurance athlete. To prevent this take in small quantities of fluids each 10 to 15 minutes.
12. Stretch. Every sport requires physical ranges of movement to be performed properly. Lack of flexibility will inhibit performance. By including flexibility training into your routine an athlete can reduce tension in the muscles, joints, ligaments and tendons. Warm muscles reduce soreness, improve flexibility and range of motion and help prevent and treat injuries. Hold your stretches for at least 20 seconds.
13. Last, but certainly not least. "Don't be out there (in a race) any longer than you need to be. It makes no sense to "save" something to prevent "something." Rather, perceive the positive and imagine a successful outcome.