

## **Making the Most of 2010**

*By Josh Logan*

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By all means there are still great road races to be run in 2009, from Jingle Bell Jogs to late-year marathons, plus indoor track season is ready to launch, but if you want to make the most out your 2010, *now* is the time to plan.

The old proverb goes, "failing to plan is planning to fail." Most of us are well aware as track aficionados that this particular proverb rings very true in our beloved sport. Yet I bump into so many who find out about a race or a meet and simply choose to jump in and "see how they do." I propose that rather than jump in a race here or a meet there, plan for one or two full seasons of racing in 2010. College and high school athletes have been, and continue to, operate in such a manner, and we see times and marks from them that generally outshine those of more seasoned athletes (some of whom should be in their prime).

Most of the dedicated coaches and athletes across the globe start formulating training plans with the end in mind by choosing when there should be a peak in performance, and then develop the plan backwards from there. Here is how you can do the same:

1. **Choose when to peak.** Most athletes in our sport choose to peak between one and three times in a calendar year. For distance runners this usually means picking out one or two track meets some time in the summer, then another late-fall/early-winter peak for cross country or road races. All other trackies usually hope for one long peak over the course of several summer meets, or a short peak in the winter for indoors, and another in the summer for outdoors.

Being a distance runner myself, my plan for 2010, provided I stay injury-free (and can get my times way down), is to peak during track season in mid-July at the USATF Masters National Championships in Sacramento, California, then again in November for the New York City Marathon. Spacing the marathon four months after track season will allow me to rest long enough after track and still build a good base for the longer distances in the fall.

2. **Put together a season.** One of my former coaches, Olympian Keith Brantly, once told me he felt he needed at least eight good 5K races in a season before he felt truly comfortable racing that distance. I feel comfortable with half as many under my belt. Regardless of your preference, your best chance of peaking, whether it be in the 5K or launching an implement from a small circle, requires you to practice competing.

For one, practicing in competition can help reduce anxiety when it counts down the road. Probably more important though, is honing your technique, and if racing developing your tactics. These performance components can be accomplished by choosing any number of races or meets in which to compete over the two to three months prior to when you want to peak. Everything changes when adrenaline gets kicking and crowds are watching, and you need to learn how to adapt to those changes.

For me, my track season will begin around the time of the USATF Florida Open & Masters Championships in Clermont, then I'll utilize summer all-comer meets in Tallahassee before I head out West for a fast (relative to me) 1,500m and 5,000m. In the fall I will shoot for some AGPR's (Age Group Personal Records) in local 5K through 20K's to tune up for an anticipated PR (Personal Record) in the NYC Marathon.

3. **Build a foundation.** Ideally, you want to build strength and endurance elements for two to three months before you enter your competitive season so that you can focus on speed and power while in-season. Hit the weights if you got 'em, do plyometrics (using your body's weight and gravity as resistance), and go long. Build your core muscles and strengthen the larger muscles in your arms and legs. High reps are the name of the game whether you are pumping iron or doing intervals. Go long to build your cardiovascular fitness. For distance runners this means take LSD seriously, Long, Slow Distance that is. Even sprinters and jumpers can benefit greatly from some distance training prior to competition in order to help them get through a potentially long season, or multiple rounds in big meets.

Late fall and winter are the *perfect* time to build your foundation in Florida. While the rest of the country and much of the World are buried in snow or relegated indoors due to low temps, we are in the enviable position of getting to train outside for long periods of time in cool, comfortable conditions. Especially for distance runners, Florida's cool but rarely cold winter allows us to build mileage outside over great lengths of time, without much risk of raising our core body temperatures much compared to training in warmer to warmer months. Studies have shown that the optimal temps for distance runners are from the upper 30's to lower 50's Fahrenheit- so take advantage while you can.

One of the biggest downsides to training in the winter is the shortage of daylight. This can be a real hindrance for distance runners trying to log lots of miles, but a great excuse for everyone to get into the weight room. It may be helpful to plan on early-morning training if you can, since it feels so much later than it is with darkness falling in late afternoon. Your mind can easily trick you into thinking it is too late to trek to the weight room or head to the track for bounding drills during winter months.

4. **Now think short-term.** With a long-term plan in place, now it is time to break down each phase by setting training and/or performance goals, and working backward again to figure out the steps to attaining those goals. Ultimately, you will want to have a detailed plan in place to start your first week or two of training, then before that time period is up, set your sights on formulating your plan for the next week or two. Using a one to two week detailed plan as you go, to fit

within your mid-term and long-term plans, will help you adjust for injuries, variances in motivation, and whatever else life throws at you.

You may find you have to revisit each step of your planning several times over the course of the year, and that is o.k. You *will* have to be flexible, so be mentally prepared for when flexibility is a necessity. But starting with the end in sight, and working backward to plan each step needed to get to that seasonal peak, is a far better method than just jumping into a competition and hoping for the best. Most of all, plan to have fun out there in 2010, but remember that you'll have more fun if you are performing to your potential.

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