

The Speedsters Experience

Coach Mark's Annual Speedsters Message

First, a HISTORY LESSON: The Speedsters started 15 years ago with a small group of six like-minded folks, who were looking to run together. They had two goals in mind: company and to get faster. Over the years the group has grown in size to over 400 athletes but the goals remain the same for your coach, as I continue to strive to safely prepare you, my athletes, to get faster but to do it a safe manner, so as to reduce the risk of injury and in a fun and encouraging way, so you're motivated to come out each week. And, from day one, the overriding theme has been **camaraderie**. Creating a weekly environment, where keeping one another company and supporting each other as we journey, as a group, to our personal racing goals have been at the core of this special group of folks since the very beginning.

So, it's so much more than just being on our email list to receive my weekly training program. As my Boston Bound marathon Captain Harry Landers so often says, "it's all about showing up and being with one another". The friendships that have formed out of us "running together" are strong, deep and committed. I always feel it's best summed up by Kara Williams, one of my longtime athletes, who says "It's more about the journey of training together than the actual races".

Here, in no particular order, are some of the many ways we continue to make the Speedsters training experience so rewarding...

*In keeping with my introduction, regular **PARTICIPATION** is the key to not only keeping the Speedster experience alive and kicking but also, to helping you continue your goal of improving your fitness level. We don't expect you to be at every Wednesday and Saturday group run...hardly anyone is able to do that, but we really do enjoy it when we have a big crowd. Not only is it more fun socially but the odds of having someone to workout with that match up with your pace zip code, increases dramatically!

*SATURDAY GROUP RUNS: So, in sticking with the Speedsters mantra of bringing folks together and keeping one another company, Leah, who helps with all the communications, and I would love to have everyone share their Saturday group run locations and starting times with us every Friday. So, everyone who initiates a Saturday group run, is encouraged to please share the location, starting time and pace of your group for that run. This is especially helpful and welcoming to our many NEW folks, who continue to join us throughout the year and who often don't yet know folks they can run with, just like most of you "veterans" were like when you first joined us. And it goes both ways, as we really want our new folks to join us for as many Wednesday and Saturday (and even Sunday) group runs. The only way to get to know folks and find training partners is to show up.

*MY FOUR Coaching GOALS: 1. To keep you, my athletes, injury free and healthy! 2. To have you look forward to lacing up your running shoes...in other words, to have you really enjoy your training experience! 3. To have your training fit and partner comfortably and peacefully into your very busy lifestyles. So, your running should never stress your life scales! 4. And, my last

goal, is to have you attain your actual race pace goal, which, I would argue, you'll be a lot more successful in achieving if Goals #1, 2 and 3 are met!

*COMMUNICATION: This is one of the single most important facets of any successful group or organization and it's no different with the Speedsters. Have a new ache or pain? Feeling extra fatigued? Need to move your Saturday long run to Friday or Sunday? Want to share something personal that is impacting your training? Have a question about a Wednesday workout? Want to go over your race pacing with me? NEW to the group and speed and feeling lost? For these and any other reason you need to talk, please get in touch with me ASAP. **And NO, you are NOT ever bothering me.** In fact, it's just the opposite, as I get frustrated when I find out (usually through someone else telling me because they've heard it from you or seen it on social media) well after the fact. Communicating INJURY issues quickly are especially important, so please get in touch with me within 24 hours of first experiencing a new pain (one side of the body is the red warning signal). The best way to get in touch with me is either by the Ragged phone (293-3367), by text (962-1694) or, my favorite, in person.

So, please keep me in the loop!

*PERCEIVED EFFORT and your AHR: Your Aerobic Heart Rate is that pace that feels totally comfortable and is the pace you should be running for MOST of your weekly miles. This "conversational" pace, where you can always very comfortably talk while running, varies as it's based on your perceived effort. So, the more tired you are, the hotter or more humid it is and the hillier the terrain is, are all factors that will most certainly slow down your **pace**. The key is to try your darndest to give into having your EFFORT **always remain the same**. Keep working on slowing it way down. I'd love to see you use less of your Garmin for pace and instead go based on your breathing, your effort and, if you have a tool to gauge it, your heart rate, which should be, for this AHR pace, around 130-140.

In my weekly email workouts, in parentheses next to your weekly mileage, I'll give percentages of how much of your total mileage should be run at AHR and how much is to be run faster than AHR. And, as I keep reminding you, your AHR should be at least 2 minutes slower than your 10 miler pace. Just keep thinking of all those 5 minute pace marathoners who run the bulk of their weekly mileage at about 7 minute pace! Hmm...

So, think of it this way: the SLOWER you run your AHR miles the less likely you are to be injured and the FITTER you'll get!

*Knowing your PACES:

AHR = As stated above, should be at least 90 seconds SLOWER than MP

MP = ~90 seconds faster than AHR

HMP = ~20-30 seconds/mile faster than MP

10 mile pace = ~10 seconds/mile faster than HMP

10K pace = ~15 seconds faster than 10 mile pace

5K pace = ~10-15 seconds/mile faster than 10K pace

2 mile pace = ~10 seconds/mile faster than 5K pace

The Speedsters' individual **race paces** currently range from sub six minutes to right about 10 minutes/mile, so I ask that you please stick to running, both for recovery days and for workouts

and long runs, with folks that are in your “pace zip code”! This goes for warming up on Wednesdays too.

*PERCENTAGE of your RACE PACES: This training cycle, I’m going to be trying something else to help you keep your AHR pace as slow as it needs to be to help you recover and feel rested and ready to go on workout and race days. So, on your recovery days (Mondays, Thursday and Sundays) and your long Saturday AHR runs I’ll be giving you a **suggested percentage of your race goal effort** to hit. I’ll also be doing this for many of your workouts. Addie, my wizzo engineering teacher son, has very kindly offered to create a calculator that you all can use to plug in your personal pace goal to then get my suggested percentage pace of that goal effort. I’ll be sending you this pace percentage calculator later this week.

*DAILY CHECKLIST:

-Sleep = 7-9 hours!

-Hydration = 60-80 ounces

-Foam rolling/stretching = every single day, **especially your non- running days, when you get extra tight!**

-Journaling = record all kinds of things from mileage and pacing to nutrition, sleep and cross training. BUT the single most important thing to note is **how you’re feeling!**

*SHOES: As awkward as it is for me to talk to you about the importance of your running shoes, it has to make the list as it literally is one of THE single most important components of your training journey. Most recreational runners, like me, who run around 4-5 miles three-four times/week, get around 400 miles of protection from their shoes. Folks training at the level of Speedsters, because of the extra pounding of the long runs, should be replacing them more like **every 350 miles!** About 30% of the injuries I see are caused by worn out shoes.

*FORM: One of the core concepts in productive, efficient and injury free long-distance running is your form mechanics. Staying off your heels and hitting the middle of your foot first will not only reduce the risk of injury but also help you to run faster. Use the “**Nose Over Toes**” (engaging your core to run with a very slight three degree lean from your ankles so as to never see your feet hit the g round in front of you) or “**30 for 20**” (30 strikes/20 seconds for one foot) rules as your mantra. Confused? Come see me for a personal tutorial.

*HILL and FLAT SURFACE SURGES: At the end of your Monday run, your Wednesday workout and your Saturday long run workout, I’ll have you doing either hill or flat surface **surges**. These surges are to be run as pickups at a pace that is faster but relaxed. I’d say around 2 mile pace or slightly faster. So, no sprinting and no straining. The purpose is two-fold: 1. to focus on efficient form by using your upper body and core to lift your knees and feet off the ground, so as to effortlessly float you forward or upwards. 2. To keep your fast twitch fibers engaged, while working on your upper body strength. So, it’s actually a form of weight training. Always make your first of these surges, your slowest, so as to safely ease into them.

Warning: if you’re prone to Achilles, calf or hamstring issues, I’d recommend skipping these or running them very gently and deliberately!

*YOUR WEEKLY REGIMEN and SPACING: My favorite 5 day/week regimen:

- Monday (3rd longest run) = recovery AHR miles with surges at the end of the run.
- Wednesday (2nd longest run...usually 6-8 miles) = workout day...your fastest day of the week.
- Thursday (shortest day) = short mileage recovery day...possible pool run day.
- Saturday (longest run of the week) = long AHR run or moderately long workout run
- Sunday (shortest day too) = recovery AHR miles or pool run day

Running four days? Then I'd recommend skipping the Sunday run.

And with weekly mileage, don't ever worry about being beyond my suggested amount.

*RECOVERY: Close to half the injuries I see are due to either running your AHR miles too quickly or not recovering properly. Recovery occurs throughout each week, as you bridge your two "workout" days with MUCH slower AHR days. And it also occurs every fourth week, when I'll have you cut back your normal weekly by at least 30%. So, if you've been averaging 45 miles/week you'll want to knock it down to about 30 miles on your recovery week.

*WEDNESDAY PROTOCOL: Wednesday is your fastest day of the week and for many, their most enjoyable day. It's certainly my favorite morning of the week. But it's also a high-risk day for **injury**, so I ask that you strictly follow this warmup regimen, so as to stay healthy. First, make sure you warmup at a slow pace with someone (or a group of folks) from your pace zip code (not with someone much faster unless they slow down). During this warmup, mentally go over your workout pace game plan one more time in your head (a well-prepared athlete has their paces and game plan mapped out before workout day). After warming up for 2-3 AHR miles, make sure to do your DYNAMIC drills (no pushing or pulling) on the track or on a flat section of pavement. This is a must! I'll be going over these dynamic drills in detail for the first few weeks of the season. Immediately after completing these dynamics, listen to my instructions as I divide everyone into smaller groups based on **PACE**. Then, ease into the actual workout by making your first "repeat", whether it's on the track or a fartlek pickup on the road, the slowest of the day. This is what I call your "bridge", as it safely takes you from your slow warmup to the faster repeats of the actual speed workout. You'll often hear me say "throw out" the first repeat, which essentially means run the first one (or first part of the first one, like the first 400 of a mile) slower than your targeted pace, so your fibers have a chance to safely ease into the heart of the workout. One of the main goals of every single workout is to "negative split" or progress throughout the workout. In essence, if done properly, the entire workout is a form of "warming up". Successfully do this and you'll not only reduce the risk of injury but you'll also enjoy the workout that much more! And, **after** you've completed the speed section of the workout and the post workout surges, run 1-2 cooldown miles at AHR, as a natural way of stretching your fibers and reducing the risk of soreness the day after.

*WEDNESDAY QUESTIONS: And one more important thing about Wednesdays: if you ever have any questions about the workout (Pacing? Length of the workout if you're coming back from a layoff? How to run the workout? Who should you run with?) please text or call me **BEFORE** Wednesday morning, so I have the opportunity to give you the thoughtful answer you deserve. Appropriate questions at the Wednesday workout would be things like: "I woke up feeling kind of sick this morning (or I was up all night with a sick child), so what should I do?" or "My calf/Achilles/hamstring feels tight this morning, so what should I do?". But anything else, please let me address or answer before Wednesday.

*CROSS TRAINING: I'm really big on cross training being a part of your weekly regimen but, to stay injury free and for it to be productive, you must select the right form of cross training and correctly fit it into your week. For my runners, the biggest goal of their cross training should be to build upper body strength (core work) and to work on being flexible, while relieving the stress caused by the pounding of land running. Remember: the purpose of cross training is to find the most efficient way to **enhance** your primary sport activity, which, in your case, is marathon running. Many forms of "cross training" can make you very tired, so they actually work against your primary activity. Fatigue is the enemy of all athletes because it negatively affects your mechanics, which can lead to injury. I'd strongly encourage you to consult with me about your favorite forms of cross training, so I can help you safely fit it into your weekly running routine.

*POOL RUNNING: One of my favorite forms of cross training is getting into the deep end of the pool for some hydra running. Pool running helps in three key ways: It strengthens your core, it gives your joints a total break as its non-weight bearing and the time in the pool counts towards your weekly mileage! Please come see me for a more detailed tutorial on this wonderful form of cross training.

****And, above all else, take stock of just how lucky we are to have each other to train with and to be able to do so in such a beautiful place. I count my experience with coaching each of you and my friendships with my Speedster family to be one of the best things in my life.

And we're so lucky to have the great volunteer services of Leah, who helps us in so many wonderful ways. Thanks, Leah for always being there!

I'm truly grateful and I can't wait to share more adventures with all of you, both as your coach and as your friend.

Let's keep enjoying this journey!
Mark