

Greetings, “Speedsters” family!

Here’s the message I’ve been promising you, with the nuts and bolts of my coaching philosophies and the keys to our Speedsters experience. I know it’s **extra-long** but I hope you’ll find all, or parts of it, to be helpful with your training experience. If you’re a member of the Boston Bound group, no need to read on, as this is a similar version of what was sent to you last week.

Thanks for taking the time to read and digest it.

Coach Mark

So, here goes...

1. The goals of the *Speedsters* remain the same since we started the group, with five folks, over fifteen years ago and even though our Speedsters numbers have grown to the 300 plus range, these important goals are still very much alive and kicking! A. To have you stay healthy and injury free. B. To have you enjoy the company of one another, both physically and spiritually, so you really look forward to lacing up your shoes each day. C. To keep your running not only in balance with the rest of your life but, even more importantly, to have your running actually *enhance* your overall lifestyle! D. To achieve your actual running goals, which range from p.r.’s to age group blue ribbons in 5K’s all the way up to half marathons or whether it’s to simply get out the door to log some social miles with friends. E. Above all else, “enjoy the journey”, which means no negative running talk or overt bragging while running and always keeping it upbeat. In other words, stick to talking about the drama of your life, about raising kids, your job, politics, movies or, in the case, of Cynthia and I, our aging and dying parents but stay away from the negativity of running drama talk, like how hot it is or how tired you are or how much you hate your running shoes!
2. And one of my favorite comebacks to folks who say they’re “too slow” to join us is: “No one is too slow! The Speedsters is for anyone who simply wants to get *faster!*”
3. In a nutshell, all of my goals, as your coach, are set up to re-create the high school cross country running experience, where team camaraderie is at its core. It simply comes down to a pile of hardworking folks, who love one another’s company in working together to get the best from their running experience while having loads of fun!
4. We have two cycles each year: a *winter training cycle* that leads to Spring races, like the 10 Miler, and a *summer training cycle* that leads to fall racing, like the Women’s Four Miler and the Richmond Half. We usually take a break in the May and another one in December to let folk’s minds and bods rest up and recover. During these recovery periods we still meet for slow and easy group runs, so as to keep our legs moving and for the wonderful social benefits of solving the world’s or their own personal problems on a run with one another.
5. Once again, I’ve synced up the workout weeks for all of my Boston Bound folks with you, my Speedsters, so that on one Saturday both groups are going AHR long and on the next Saturday both groups are running shorter/faster. The Wednesday workouts will be very similar too. This is so folks, even though training for a different race in a different month, can still keep one another company, for at least part of the long run or workout, as long as they’re in the same “pace zip code”.

6. As usual, I'll do my best to get my weekly message out to you, through our wonderful Captain Leah, on Sunday evening. I'll give you your marching orders for Monday, Wednesday and Saturday. The rest is up to you to fill in the other days so that your mileage equates to my suggested weekly mileage. Most of the crew, when in training for a longer distance race, like the 10 Miler, runs 4-5 days/week with something like the following: M, W, Th, Sat (and maybe Sun.).
7. Your total weekly mileage is one of the single most important components of your training and should be followed as best possible. Historically, our folks who hit the suggested mileage, have also accomplished their race goals more frequently than those who do not. Pool running miles and treadmill 100% count too! If you're ahead of the mileage I'm suggesting, that's great and if you've fallen behind, please give me a shout, so we can safely bring your mileage back up.
8. Speaking of treadmills, I love that many of you are using them for convenience, comfort or safety for some of your weekly mileage. This is totally fine for any of your AHR miles. What I continue to guide you with is making sure that if you're doing one of the excellent indoor treadmill "workouts", like Formula, Orange Theory or Tread Happy, that to make sure that you're never doing these hard, quality "workouts" the day BEFORE and AFTER your "speed" workout, so never on Tuesdays or Thursdays and never the day before your long run, so no Fridays either.
9. And while we're on the days of the week, here's an explanation on the PURPOSE of each run in a typical Speedsters weekly regimen). Starting with MONDAYS, which is one of our three "Q" (as in Quality) days, where you tax your body a bit more than AHR (Aerobic Heart Rate) during part of the run. MONDAY mileage ranges from 4-7 and always has a "*form drill surge*" component to it. These short bursts, whether on flat or hilly terrain, are NOT "all-out" sprints but rather, faster surges, where you focus on form by using your upper body (core, torso, arms and glutes) to lift your knees. In the past, for some reason beyond me, only a small percentage of our folks have consistently practiced doing these. This is a "no-no" as the benefits are great! Think of them as a form of weight training and most physiologists agree that these "*form surges*" are key in helping long distance runners from overusing their slow twitch fibers and are very helpful in building your upper body strength, which is key in holding your form in the latter stages of your race. So, unless you're really prone to hammy, calf or Achilles issues, these are a MUST! Oh, and make sure you run the first surge the easiest and slowest so as to ease into them! WEDNESDAY is our big "speed" day, where you actually usually run faster than your race pace. Make sure to warmup with folks of similar pace (usually ~2 miles) and then come back (to where I'm at) for a good dose of *dynamic drills* (no static stretching prior to workouts). As usual, I'll do my best to break you up into pace groups, so you're always running with folks of similar fitness or ability. After completing your actual workout, run 1-2 cool down miles (I'm big on post workout barefoot striders too), so that your total is somewhere in the 5-8 mile range for the day. SATURDAYS alternate between either a long slow AHR run (ultimately in the 8-10 range for 5K-10K folks and 13-17 range for our 10 miler or half marathon folks) or a moderate length run with a pace practice workout (usually in the 7-10 mile range). It's important that you note in your journals, which I'm big on you keeping, things like when, what and how much you ate the evening before your long run, so, when it works, you can duplicate that on race weekend.

10. The rest of the days are actually the MOST IMPORTANT days of the week. These are your **RECOVERY** days, when you should be running as slow as it takes to get you feeling refreshed for your “Q” days. A poor man’s guide rule is to hardly hear yourself breathing on these recovery runs. Some days this pace will be slower than others depending on how tired you are...so run as slow as whatever it takes to make you “FEEL” like it’s very easy. Don’t get hung up the “pace” that your Garmin says, instead run based on your PERCEIVED EFFORT. So, the goal of these days is to get you feeling totally rested for your Wednesday or Saturday runs. If you can’t nail the paces on a workout day you’re probably not running SLOW enough on your recovery days.
11. Your AHR (Aerobic Heart Rate or “conversational pace” or “this feels so easy that I could run at this rate all day long” pace) is the MOST IMPORTANT pace for a long-distance runner. For most folks, it’s at least **2-3 minutes slower than their targeted 5K-10K Pace and 90 seconds-2 minutes/mile slower than their targeted 10 mile-Half Marathon paces** . The great African marathoners race sub 5 minute pace yet they run most of their miles at 7-7:30 pace...really! As I’ve just said in #9, this is the pace you will be running for about 75-85% of your total weekly mileage. Some folks refer to it as the “80/20 rule”, where 80% of the week is slow and easy and the other 20% is at your targeted race pace or faster. Abuse this and you will most surely either burn out prior to race day or get injured due to fatigue. This is especially critical to follow for all of your warmup and cooldown miles on Wednesdays and for all of the miles of your long AHR Saturdays. Run too fast for these AHR miles and you will feel sluggish and will struggle to hit your pace times on your “Q” days.
12. Have a question about the Wednesday workout (paces, etc.)? Then please ask me prior to Wednesday, when I can give you (when I’m less distracted) a thoughtful answer. So, no asking on Wednesday morning unless it’s an appropriate question like, “I was up with my sick child most of the night last night. What should I do today?”. The type of questions to ask **ahead of time**, when I can give you the thoughtful answer you deserve, are “What pace should I run today?” or “I’m just starting back again after having missed some time due to injury, so what should I do today?”.
13. And speaking of Wednesday questions, a big one to always ask ahead of time is: “I have to move my Saturday long run/workout to Friday this week. What should I do on Wednesday?”. This is so important to communicate because the risk of injury skyrockets when you compress those “Q” days, unedited, closer together.
14. Communication is the key to a healthy relationship with your running and with our personal coach-athlete relationship. The more you communicate with me the better and safer your running will go. I’m available by phone (at 293-3367) during the day or by text (at 962-1694) anytime but my favorite form of communication is FACE to FACE. And the single most IMPORTANT issue to communicate with me is when a new pain crops up, especially if it’s on only one side of your body. I need to hear about this within 24 hours of its inception, so we can get on top of it right away. The longer you wait to communicate the greater the chance you will have to miss lots of time.
15. We will continue to workout on Wednesdays at CHS, until it gets light enough for the UVa track to be open at a reasonable time, which won’t happen until late spring. I know this isn’t everyone’s ideal place but your coach (and many others) like it for the following reasons: It’s footing is superior during the cold winter months (The Park has that one really icy section, where snow melts during the day and then hardens as thick ice at

night); it has less auto traffic than at The Park and less people on your workout route than The Park; Plus, it has that awesome seamless transition from the track to road for our hybrid workouts I so often design for you. Thanks for being supportive of our group goal of having us run together in one central location on Wednesdays.

16. And speaking of running together, please do your best to get Captain Leah your SATURDAY group run times and locations by Friday. In addition to where and when, please let Leah know the **PACE** your group will be running too. This is such an important part of the *Speedsters* experience in that it helps **new folks** get engaged with our group and helps everyone have more company on Saturday. Simply put: it builds community and creates running friendships. I would love to have everyone do this. Thanks!
17. As I mentioned earlier, your SATURDAY runs will either be long and slow at AHR or shorter with pace practice. The long slow ones should be run at your AHR (2-3 minutes slower than race pace). Never, ever rush these, especially the really long ones. Your race pace practice Saturdays should always start with 1-2 miles at the same pace you plan to warmup at on race day (prior to your race start). Try, also, to duplicate your race course terrain for these pace practice runs. Practice your hydration (water or sports drinks) and nutrition (gus, gels) regimen on these Saturday runs too. Note in your journal/log successes and bombs.
18. **Cross training** is a must for distance runners and the goal should be to increase flexibility and strengthen your core and this cross training should always **enhance and strengthen, not tire out**, your overall running! Things like pool running, spinning, swimming, Pilates, Barre and yoga are great as long as your careful to when and how often you do them. I'm a huge fan of daily situps, planks and push-ups in the comfort of your own home.
19. And don't forget to stay on top of the "little daily things" like foam rolling (once or twice/day), sleep (7-8 hours) and hydration (60 ounces/day)!
20. It takes me around an hour to write your message and workouts each week, a Sunday ritual I totally enjoy, but, at the risk of sounding like a whiner, I'd really like for you to actually read that message. Yes, a percentage of you do but many others don't. I often have what I think are valuable tips included in those messages not to mention accomplishments or milestones from your fellow Speedster family.
21. Keep a written log that journals important things like *pace, how you're feeling, fatigue, hydration, what pre-long run meals are working, rolling* and other valuable clues to successes and potholes.
22. Another *Speedster* ritual, which most coaches actually practice, is to meet with me the week or two prior to race day to go over your game plan. This gives me an opportunity to help guide you to a safe and realistic approach to your race. I also really enjoy our post-race meetings, no matter how your race went. We both learn from these valuable follow up meetings. I'm still, even after 40 years, learning new things, through your personal experiences, that help to enhance my coaching, which ultimately benefits all of my athletes.
23. The heart and soul of the *Speedsters experience* and what makes it special is our people and how they positively engage with, motivate and inspire one another. And, at its core are our group runs, especially Wednesdays and Saturdays. Thanks for being a part of this special group...you make it so rewarding and enjoyable for me. I'm really looking

forward to another fun, exciting and successful cycle this winter and spring. Let's keep the journey alive and kicking, no matter what your personal goals are!

#### PACE CHART

\*AHR (Aerobic Heart Rate/conversational pace) = ~1-2 minutes/mile slower than MP or ~2-3 minutes/mile slower than 5K pace!

\*MP = ~20-25 seconds/mile slower than half marathon pace

\*HMP (Half Marathon Pace) = ~10 seconds/mile slower than 10 miler pace

\*10 Mile pace = ~15-20 seconds/mile slower than 10K pace

\*10K pace = ~10-15 seconds/mile slower than 5K pace

\*5K pace = ~5-10 seconds/mile slower than 2 mile pace

\*2 mile time trial = ~5-10 seconds/mile faster than 5K pace