

## 800/1500 Meter Training

A) Introduction – John Gondak, Head Coach, Penn State University

1) 9th year at Penn State

2) Coached at Kentucky (8 years), Toledo (2 years) and Georgia Tech (1 year)

3) Competed at Syracuse University (800/1500 and XC)

## B) Description of Athletes Coached

- 1) At Penn State – Cas Loxsom (1:15.42, 1:45.28 – 500, 600 and 800 school record holder), Marta Klebe (4:15.20 – 1500 school record), Brannon Kidder (1:46.87, 3:38.82 – 1500 school record), Ryan Foster (3:39.57, 1:46.78), Robby Creese (1:48.64, 3:57.11 – indoor mile school record), Owen Dawson (1:47.77, 3:59.8 mile), Mark Miller (1:47.83 – first Big Ten 800 Champion!), athletes have won 10 of the last 14 Big Ten 800 meter championships
- 2) At Kentucky – recruited and worked with many sub 1:50/2:07 and sub 4:05/4:45 milers runners including: Brooke Patterson, Beth Heimann, Hunter Spencer, David Freeman, James Doaty, Jean Balan, Caity Phillips
- 3) At Kentucky specifically coached more of the distance runners while learning from Don Weber who coached the middle distance runners. Caity Phillips was the SEC 5k Champion and 3k runner up who I worked with at UK. Allison Grace was a 2 time NCAA Cross Country qualifier
- 4) Common thread – regardless of middle distance or long distance, these athletes wanted to be their best!

### C) Mindset of the athlete

- 1) Focus is always to compete – not a specific time
- 2) Athletes need to feel like they are being successful in practice everyday  
set up good training groups both on the track and for distance runs
- 3) Continue to reinforce the training they have done has prepared them to compete – they have to believe!
- 4) The athlete needs to trust you, the coach, that you will always put them in an environment where they can succeed
- 5) An athlete that is 70% fit but believes will always compete well vs an athlete that is 100% fit but doesn't have faith in themselves

## D) Competitions

- 1) Pick certain competitions where you are going to focus on being your best and set your training and races around these competitions
- 2) Don't race your primary event every meet or every weekend! Mix it up
- 3) Try to have your 800 runners compete in the 4x4 at the end of every meet even your 1500 runners if it makes sense
- 4) Don't race just to race – there needs to be a purpose
- 5) Again – seed the athletes appropriately at the competitions  
Never put a 4:20/5:00 miler in a race that is going to run 4:00/4:40

## E) Training – what I am sure everyone is waiting to hear about!

### 1) The Summer and Fall conditioning phases

- a) Cross country/distance training is critical for 800/1500 training
- b) Steady paced running in the summer with tempos and fartlek runs  
The pace the athlete runs at is VERY important: 6:00/7:00 pace
- c) Cross Country workouts in the fall build great strength – the strength to finish the race
- d) Progression runs are a fantastic workout
- e) Adjust the workouts for the caliber of athlete
- f) We train for minutes, not distance
- g) Athletes have to believe in the distance running aspect of things

## 2) Post XC Championship phase into Competition Phase

- a) This is usually November and December into early Jan for indoor
- b) Continue XC style training but start to build in speed  
we run 3-4 fast 200's or 300's after aerobic workouts
- c) Start to incorporate more hills into workouts  
longer hills for strength (60-80 seconds)  
shorter hills for speed (25-35 seconds)
- d) Keep your distance up in this phase
- e) We stay off the track as long as the weather is nice  
why?? kids start to measure and put a time to themselves

### 3) Competition Phase, January and February

- a) Start to incorporate more pure speed work into the equation for 800m
  - 5 x 400 cut downs
  - 600 at pace – 400 fast
  - running 4x4's is great speed work
- b) Still continue strength work as well for both 800 and 1500
  - 3x2, 2x3, 5, 2x3, 3x2 all at 90 seconds rest
  - 1000 at pace – then 3 sets of 3 x 200 with 60 sec rest/5 min
  - 2 sets of 5 x 300 with 90 sec rest/4 min
  - 400-600-400-200 with 200 jog recovery
  - sets of 400's at 60 to 90 seconds rest
- c) Make sure the athletes continue to do their distance runs at a good pace – this is critical!
- d) Make sure the athletes are building confidence by racing successfully

- 4) Peaking Phase, end of February into March
  - a) Start to lessen mileage and aerobic work
  - b) If in the weight room – start to cut back
  - c) “Freshen up”
  - d) Most workouts are pure speed based for 800
    - 3x200, 3x200, 600 all out
    - 400-200-300-200 fast with unlimited recovery
    - 3 x 300 or 3 x 400 with unlimited recovery
  - e) Workouts for the 1500 are at pace with some speed
    - 2 sets of 800 at pace, 400 fast with unlimited recovery
    - 4 x 400 at goal pace with 60 seconds rest followed by some fast 200’s
  - e) Tune up their mind – make sure they believe they are ready



5) Indoor into outdoor

- a) Take a break – usually a week of easy running/days off
- b) Go back to step two and repeat for the outdoor season
- c) Need a mental break

## F) The Intangibles

- 1) Always work on core strength
- 2) Strength to finish a race comes from distance running, not the weight room
- 3) Weights are excellent, as long as they supplement the running
- 4) Stay healthy – weeks of consistent training is the most important thing
- 5) Stretch, Stretch and more stretching – AFTER THE RUN
- 6) Do all the little things and you will achieve BIG THINGS
- 7) Diet and rest are critical
- 8) Make it fun!!!