



## **Middle Distance**

Middle distance events are the most demanding in track and field because they are actually long sprints. Usually 800m and 1500m events are considered middle distance. Training is designed to develop these attributes. A training program should be developed to meet individual needs.

### **Technique**

When coaching middle distance runners, the coach needs to find the right combination of speed and endurance for each athlete.

1. It is important to have a comfortable stride and rhythm and to not overstride.
2. The foot strikes the ground less on the ball of the foot and more to the back of the foot, the foot rolls onto the ball and pushes off.
3. The knee has some flex.
4. Knee lift is lower than that of a sprinter.
5. Heel does not go as high.
6. Leg movement is smooth.
7. Swing arms from shoulders; elbows are bent at approximately a 90-degree angle but can straighten a little more on the down swing. Arms and shoulders should be relaxed.
8. Head straight; focus ahead ten to fifteen meters.



### **Training Focus (Workout Theory) for Middle Distance**

The focus of middle distance training is pace, with a balance between volume and intensity. Athletes need a good aerobic base to allow them to be able to pace themselves. However, they also need to incorporate speed training. They need good endurance to maintain speed over middle distance races.

Middle distance runners should try and maintain a predetermined pace established by their coach. An example would be running 400m in 45 seconds every lap during a 1600m training run. As well, the coach should set appropriate times for the athlete to run set distances at certain time intervals; for example, the athlete would run 200m every three minutes. To improve, the athlete would increase speed or decrease time to shorter intervals.

To work on speed, the athlete can do “surges.” For example, have cones set out at intervals around the track. The athlete will run at normal stride to first cone and then “surge,” or increase speed, to next cone and keep changing from normal to “surge” between cones.



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## **Middle Distance Drills**

As a general rule, duration for the 800m runner is not very long, 25-35 minutes on non-track days and 45 minutes to an hour on the long run day. Remember: the focus is maintaining speed over a longer distance.

### **Russian Workout**

Reps: 5x, increase to 15

#### **Purpose**

- ♦ Develop speed endurance

#### **Teaching Points**

1. Run 5x200m at  $\frac{3}{4}$  race pace.
2. Rest 45 seconds between each 200m.
3. After five repetitions, rest three minutes.
4. Repeat.

### **Distance Runs**

Include a distance run of 60-90 minutes. This run is set at a pace that the runner can manage without too much stress. This run is one of two kinds, depending on the type of effort and recovery needed. One type is a flat, soft-surfaced, continuous run. Early in the season, do not worry so much about time. As the season progresses, mark each mile and make necessary corrections.

### **Hill Running**

The other long distance run is more difficult. The first 30 minutes are flat. The next 20 minutes need to have a series of uphill climbs or a steady hill climb. As in the distance run, early in the season do not worry so much about time. As the season progresses, push the athlete to faster times over the same course.

### **Interval Training**

Adjust recovery times as necessary.

1. Increasing speed/decreasing recovery reps
  - 2 sets of 4 x 200m
  - No additional recovery between sets
2. Russian intervals
  - 2 sets of 3 x 300m at set pace with jog
  - Recovery between 300s: 100m at 30 seconds
  - Jog 800m between sets
3. Pick-up Reps
  - 4 x 400m at set pace

Recovery between 400s: 90 seconds