

## Getting Ready for the Spring Racing Season

By

Tim Neckar

YEAAAAA!!! You finished your marathon last month! Congratulations if you ran Houston, Disney, Rock n' Roll Arizona, Miami, or any of the other 28 marathons that happened around the world in the month of January. You've earned a little rest and relaxation for your accomplishment. But not too much now, because there are plenty of races in the spring to keep you "up on your toes"! A renewed sense of enthusiasm should keep you motivated realizing that those weekend long runs are over for now.

If you don't have a spring marathon awaiting in the wings, it is now time to change gears and redirect your training to more quality than quantity workouts as before the marathon. Sure, you'll still need to put in the weekend run of 8 – 10 miles to keep you honest, but 5Ks, 10Ks, and possibly half marathons are in your near future. With these shorter races, this means faster paces, and faster paces mean more speed work. Intervals, fartleks (a Swedish term meaning "speed play"), and track workouts are now necessary evils to get your pace faster.

Since you ran the marathon, you now have a good aerobic base for speed training. You've been training aerobically (with air) for months. You have given your body plenty of oxygen to train with to get you to the marathon finish line. Now it is time to train anaerobically (without air) to get faster. This means getting your body into oxygen debt and making your cardiovascular system stronger by making it demand more oxygen than you can breathe in. This means you'll be getting out of your "comfort zone". I'm not saying you'll be sucking for air like there is no tomorrow, but a gradual getting out of it once or twice a week will make you a faster runner. Sure, you have speed in those legs, but how long will it last and how far will you go if you don't train anaerobically?

You'll need to do speedwork once or twice a week. One thing to keep in mind when beginning speedwork is the risk of injury. Make sure that you always warm-up and stretch before doing any speed workout. Since you're going to be picking up the pace in some workouts, you'll need to be aware that now you'll be putting a different stress on your body, particularly your legs. Going faster means you'll be getting up on the balls of your feet, which now wreaks havoc on your arches, Achilles tendon, and calves. So be aware of any aches, twinges, or sharp pains during or after workouts. Stop the speed work immediately, have a doctor look at the painful areas. I usually just back off the speed work until the pain subsides and then I try again.

Now for your workouts... There are many simple ones you can do around your neighborhood if you don't go to Memorial Park or a track to do your running. Here are some of my favorite ones. Negative Split. This is a workout that is basically picking a distance or time, divide it in half, and run the second half of the run faster than the first half. This is usually an "out and back" run. Meaning you run your route, and when you reach the halfway point, turn around and repeat the course in reverse. Another workout is the light pole/house/mailbox run. With this workout, you first run a 5 minute warm-up jog,

then whatever is around your neighborhood that is equal distance apart like light poles, houses, driveways, or mailboxes. Run one hard and then one easy, then run two hard, then two easy, then run 3 hard and then 3 easy. Repeat the sequence again or two more times. If you don't have this in your neighborhood, then you can do it by time. Say 30 seconds hard, 1 minute easy and go from there. The possibilities are endless here since you can make up your own time of hard/easy intervals. These types of workouts are fartleks and intervals.

If you're at the Park or a track, you can do interval workouts on either the track or at the Park since the Park is marked every quarter mile. You can do interval repeats of  $\frac{1}{4}$  miles,  $\frac{1}{2}$  miles,  $\frac{3}{4}$  miles, or miles. If you're at the track, you can run intervals of 200s (as in 200 meters), 300s, 400s, and so on. Start out with doing 5 – 6 repeats, then adding one per week up to 10 – 12. Just be sure to take a recovery walk of at least 100 meters between each interval. Be certain you ease into these speed workouts and don't overdo it. The goal here is to train smart, not hard, and don't pass me on the track!