

Vic's Fit Tips

James and I were discussing the need for heart rate monitors for runners and we thought this would be a good topic for an article. When do you need a heart rate monitor, what can you do if you do not use one, are they really just more junk to lug around?

James uses his heart rate monitor only during power workouts, and during races, but not for every workout. I say that for the average runner, or the beginning runner, a heart rate monitor is probably more junk to lug around. You really only need one when you have reached your near peak performance, and you are trying to shave a few more seconds off your race time, or are really going for it in a race. So how can the rest of us enjoy running, and still monitor our progress from day to day?

I have said consistently that my main goal is to have you complete your training injury free. To do this it is important to avoid over-training and pushing yourself too hard on your easy training days. Most of us think of easy days as just that, a day to enjoy a relaxing pace and to talk with our running buds. But I know that many of you out there are over training, going too hard on your easy days. Easy means easy, folks. One of the most important ways to avoid this is to follow a training schedule. Part of my business is to design custom training schedules, but it is up to the client to follow the schedule. Even if you are following a training schedule off the internet (see Runners' World or similar magazine websites) it is important to stick to it. But how do you know what your easy pace should be? Rather than give you a complicated formula, I say that you can tell the difference by breaking your perceived effort into three phases. Hard, Tempo and Easy. On a hard workout, you are giving it everything you've got and you can't sustain it for very long. After a minute or so, you have to quit and rest. You will be breathing very hard at the end of a hard workout.

In contrast, Easy effort is sustainable for 1-4 hours. You are able to talk normally with your buds while running at an easy pace. The important thing is that your breathing is easy and relaxed. Many runners use walking break even on easy workouts. This is great as it allows your musculature to recover faster. You may not even be thinking about running a marathon, but this would be a good pace to lock in for your longer run workouts.

This leaves the tempo pace. Some of your workouts, probably once a week will be at a harder pace than normal. These tempo workouts will improve your speed and your fitness and we promise to devote at least a couple of articles to this at a later date. For now, suffice to say that during the tempo your breathing is harder than normal, but sustainable. You are able to run at this fast pace for at least 10 minutes before you need a break. As you reach a higher level of fitness you will be able to maintain your tempo pace for amazingly longer runs. You should aim for 10 minutes to start, but our elite runners can maintain their tempo pace for an hour or more!

So follow your schedule, never go hard or tempo on your easy days and observe your level of effort. Save your Heart Rate monitor for the time when you want to reach the

next level of performance. Follow these rules and you will stay injury free throughout your training.

Vic and James

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