

# Winter Training

By Nina Anderson



Whilst Summer seems to lend itself to running, and sunnier days to speedier training times, the onset of cooler Winter weather, coupled with darker mornings can test the resolve of even the keenest of athletes and make it difficult for some to maintain motivation for training - so what can be done to help make this transition?

**This time of** year can serve a dual purpose. It may act as a welcome recovery period at the end of a series of track or road races. After this, many runners begin a strength and aerobic conditioning phase which will lay the foundation from which to progress towards the next specific goal e.g. the following year's track season, a Spring marathon or a new fitness regime. For those who enjoy racing in cold, wet and muddy conditions the cross-country season runs from October to March.

## Recovery Period

If the Summer has been spent racing either on the track or road, it is advisable to take a break at the end of this time in order to recuperate, both mentally and physically, from the many months of training. This is also an ideal opportunity to look back on the training, racing or fitness regime and analyse whether it has been effective.

- If initial goals were set, were they realistic and have they been achieved?

(e.g. fat loss, specific races with target times, to make training a part of everyday living etc.)

- What went well in training and can this be improved upon?
- What did not go well and what changes need to be made to address this?
- What challenges/problems presented themselves and what could be done to resolve them?

Some examples are:-



Problem	Possible Solution
<b>Finding enough time to train</b>	On Sunday look at the week ahead and plan exercise into time available. Write this in a diary as a visual reminder of when training will take place. Any other appointments/ activities should, wherever possible, be accommodated around this schedule
<b>Lack of motivation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Set realistic and attainable targets and work progressively towards each one</li> <li>• Training with a group or running partner can be a source of support and encouragement</li> </ul>
<b>Target times not being met</b>	<p>This could be dependent on one or more of the following reasons and addressed respectively:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are the target times unrealistic for ability? – training may need to be adjusted and/or more realistic goals set</li> <li>• Is there a gradual progression? – try not to do too much too soon – may need to adjust training</li> <li>• Are physical factors such as nutrition, sleep and rest adequate for demands of training?</li> <li>• Have external factors been accounted for? - strong winds and very cold weather</li> </ul>

## Base Fitness Training

For many, this time of year is the start of a preparation period concentrating on the improvement of both aerobic and strength conditioning, as this forms the base from which to progress. Putting this foundation into place helps to decrease the chance of injury and may be considered as a necessary starting point for any training regime. For the runner who has a target of a Spring marathon, indoor and/or outdoor track or road races the following Summer, this preparation phase can be quite simple. As a general rule, it consists of an increase in the volume of work whilst keeping training at a low intensity (e.g. a runner may wish to increase mileage on a weekly basis with fairly 'easy' runs). Using a heart rate monitor can be useful during this period as it gives direct feedback and can help to monitor the level of intensity of training. It is therefore a visual method of seeing both progression and an improvement in fitness which can be encouraging and motivational.

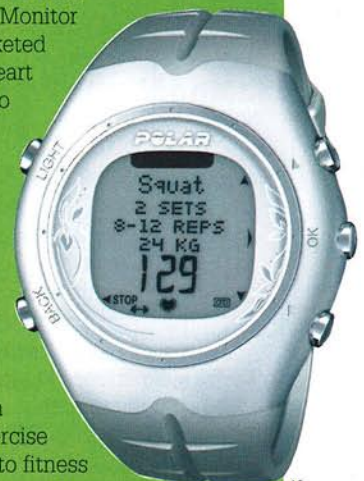
To compliment the aerobic conditioning of the steady runs a circuit is a fantastic way to improve fitness (strength conditioning) and easy to schedule into the day as it can be done relatively quickly. Home equipment such as exercise bands, stability balls and Gymstick may also be used.



[www.gymstick.co.uk](http://www.gymstick.co.uk) [www.sportdimensions.com](http://www.sportdimensions.com)  
Gymstick UK retailer 0208 563 007

I tried out Polar's new F55a1 Fitness Monitor which is marketed as 'the only heart rate monitor to provide a holistic approach to training'.

As well as featuring Polar's trademark OwnZone® which determines an individual exercise zone specific to fitness level, it has many other useful functions. These include the 'Keep U Fit' workout programme which helps to plan training and sets specific exercise session targets in order to reach personal fitness goals. It also has the 'Polar Body Workout', a guide to strength training offering a default programme as a starting point for the inexperienced, though I would suggest that you ask for help from a gym instructor to ensure good technique. I would recommend this monitor for someone who is not concerned about mileage or session splits/lap times but who wants an all round general fitness programme and would use it as a motivational and practical training tool.....oh yes, and it looks cool too.



[www.polarelectro.co.uk](http://www.polarelectro.co.uk)

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## Training plans

It can often be helpful to devise a weekly training plan. This can be both motivational (by having a visual stimulus) and helpful in that it can make it easier to see how training may progress. This plan should be:-

- **Goal orientated** – the programme should be devised with a specific goal in mind, for example to attain a fitness improvement which allows an individual to run for 30 minutes continually, or to begin a structured training regime with the following track or Summer racing season in mind. This goal must be able to be broken down into small, measurable and attainable targets
- **Realistic** – the targets set must be achievable
- **Practical** – there is no point in planning training which cannot be accommodated into everyday living and work/time commitments, otherwise it will be destined to fail from the onset

**Below are some examples of early Winter training programmes:-**

**Level** – novice runner

**Goal** – start of Winter fitness regime

mon	tues	wed	thurs	fri	sat	sun
20 min run	body weight circuit	25 min run	REST	body weight circuit	REST	Longer Run 30 min +

**Level** – intermediate runner

**Goal** – 10k

mon	tues	wed	thurs	fri	sat	sun
body weight circuit	Fartlek (session incorporating different bursts of speed in varying lengths)	body weight circuit	Fartlek	body weight circuit	REST	Long Run
30m run		30m run	OR REST	30m run		

**Level** – experienced marathon runner

**Goal** – Spring marathon

mon	tues	wed	thurs	fri	sat	sun
AM: easy run		AM: easy run (optional)	AM: easy run	AM: easy run		AM: long run (max 1:45) start medium pace finish faster
PM: steady run	PM: track session	PM: steady run	PM:shorter track session	PM:weights/circuit	REST	

These examples give a general overview of different plans which may be used as a means to begin the improvement of both aerobic and strength conditioning. The duration of this phase would be dependent upon athletic background, fitness, and individual event requirements. It is important to remember that training should always be event specific and goal orientated.





### Hill Training and Cross-Country

After working on the improvement of aerobic conditioning (e.g. by increasing weekly mileage), the schedule can then be progressed through the introduction of hill training. This will strengthen the leg muscles and encourage an increased stride length, which will in turn help to improve running economy. Examples of sessions are:-

- E.g. 1) 8 - 10 x 1 minute up hill (use jog back down as recovery or begin when pulse has dropped to 20 beats/10second count)
- E.g. 2) 2 x 5 x 100m of hill (90 seconds, 3 minutes) i.e. 90 seconds between reps and 3 minutes between sets
- E.g. 3) 6 - 8 x 80 - 100m of hill (3 minutes rest) i.e. enough recovery to allow for quicker times

Session variations which may be applied are:-

- Length of run in distance or time
- Number of repetitions (reps) and/or sets in each session
- Length of rest period and whether it is jog or standing
- Speed of run which will be governed by number of reps and length of rest period

As with any session it is important to warm-up prior to the start and finish with a cool-down jog and stretching.

Participating in cross-country racing is a very different mental and physical experience to that of track and road running. It is advisable to incorporate hill sessions into training prior to taking part in cross-country. Running style will vary dependent upon ground conditions. By comparison to running on road or track, foot strike, body position, stride length and arm action will work differently in order to accommodate the terrain variation and maintain balance. Many cross-country races take place through a local club.

### Invest in a vest – or two...

Investing in quality running gear will help to make training in colder weather more bearable. Wearing layers is a popular and successful method of staying warm as these act as insulators. It is important however not to wear too many as, regardless of air temperature, heat will be generated when running. If a runner overheats this may lead to dehydration and/or chill through excessive sweating. Specialist fabrics are designed to keep heat in whilst allowing the moisture to escape. It is better to avoid cotton next to the skin as it





absorbs moisture which may then result in a chill. Items such as fleece leggings, tighter fitting vests (which act as a 'base' layer), reflective clothing, lightweight gloves, hats, and jackets which offer both wind and rain protection are useful garments to have at this time of year. However, many runners can be seen out in cold conditions wearing only vest, shorts, hat and gloves, whilst for others it is a case of wrapping up like Nanook of the North. To summarise, clothing choice is really a question of personal preference combined with duration and/or intensity of training.

**All clothes featured are either Puma or New Balance:**  
**New Balance 0800 3891055 [www.newbalance.co.uk](http://www.newbalance.co.uk)**  
**Puma 01924 425555 [www.pumarunning.com](http://www.pumarunning.com)**

### Running Safety

- Avoid wearing personal stereos
- Wear luminous and/or reflective clothing
- If possible avoid running alone (to find a running club or group go to [www.runtrackdir.com/ukclubs](http://www.runtrackdir.com/ukclubs) or [www.womensrunningnetwork.co.uk](http://www.womensrunningnetwork.co.uk))
- Tell someone where you are going to run and how long you will be
- Run with a view of oncoming traffic
- Plan your route and avoid any secluded areas

### Race Report

'I ran the first kilometre in under 9 minutes and felt quite comfortable. As the runners spread out in the following kilometres I was able to get into a rhythm and increased my pace gradually throughout the race. I couldn't believe it when I stopped my watch as I crossed the finish line as it showed that I had completed the 5k in an astonishing 40 minutes and 12 seconds, well inside my target time of 50 minutes. I still can't believe it - I was empowered, overjoyed, exhilarated and tired. It was, in all honesty, an amazing experience and I felt privileged to be amongst so many women running for so many worthy causes. All those early mornings in the gym and runs along the canal certainly paid off.'



Shân with her friends pre-race



Shân and her well-deserved medal

## Update of Case Study Shân Hughes (Age - 52)



	Initial	After 42 weeks
weight	110.2kg	104.4kg
% fat	47.50%	43.5%

When Shân began training her goal was to be able to run continuously for 30 minutes. Initially, she could only run for 2 minutes at a time before having to stop for breath. She can now run for over an hour, and does so on a weekly basis. On September 16th Shân took part in the Hydro Active Women's Challenge in Hyde Park, which was billed as one of the UK's premier 5k women's road running events.

Shân planned her race day carefully. She arrived at the park with plenty of time to spare and was able to check the route and warm-up. Her training had given her the confidence to set herself a target time of sub 50 minutes and she was sure that she would be able to run the entire way without needing to walk at any point.



Nina has a passion for athletics and fitness. She started jogging at the relatively late age of 25, and only stepped on to the track for the first time four years later. Now, at the age of 35, she is a

competitive athlete (400m and 800m). As an athletics coach she specialises in technical drills, strength and conditioning, and designing individual running programmes. Together with this, Nina works as a Fitness Mentor with a very wide range of clients. [www.ninaanderson.com](http://www.ninaanderson.com)