

## 2010 Old Mutual Om Die Dam 50 km Programme

PLEASE READ OUR DISCLAIMER AT THE END OF THIS TRAINING PROGRAMME

*[The 2010 Om Die Dam programme utilizes the core of the programme produced by the late Virtual Coach- Dave Spence who passed in January 2010 with minor modification by Norrie Williamson]*

### General information and Definitions

#### Long Runs

The key to all my ultra marathon programmes is the long run on weekends. You can skip an occasional workout or juggle the schedule depending on other commitments, but do not cheat on the long runs.

*Run Slow:* I know this is tough for you. You want to go out on those long runs and BLAST! Don't! Normally I recommend that runners do their long runs 60 sec per km or more slower than their race pace. This is very important. The physiological benefits kick in around 90-120 minutes, no matter how fast you run. You'll burn a few calories and trigger glycogen regeneration, teaching your muscles to conserve fuel.

Running too fast defeats this purpose and may unnecessarily tear down your muscles, compromising not only your midweek workouts, but the following week's long run. Save your fast running for the ultra marathon itself. There are plenty of days during the rest of the week, when you can run fast. So simply do your long runs at a comfortable pace, one that allows you to converse with your training partners, at least during the beginning of the run.

3/1 Training: Toward the end of the run, if you're still feeling fresh, you may want to pick up the pace and finish somewhat faster. This will convert your long run into what I call a 3/1 Run. That means you run the first three quarters of your long run (say the first 18 km of a 24 km) at an easy pace, then do the final one-quarter (6 km of a 24 km) at a somewhat faster pace-- though still not race pace. This 3/1 strategy is advised for only the most experienced runners and I don't recommend you do it more than once out of every three weekends. In other words: first weekend, easy run; second weekend, 3/1 Run; third weekend, step back to a shorter distance. My philosophy is that it's better to run too slow during long runs, than too fast.

#### Hill Training

Hill training in this programme is scheduled for every third Tuesday. I alternate hill training with tempo runs and interval training mainly to provide you with some variety in your training. If you want to juggle the workouts for your convenience, feel free to do so.

Hill repeats can be an important part of your training, because running hills will strengthen your quadriceps muscles. Also, there is less impact running up a hill than running fast on the flat. If your planned ultra marathon is on a hilly course, you might want to run more than the half dozen hill workouts I've included.

Best choice would be to substitute hill repeats for some, if not all, of the interval workouts. And/or do your tempo runs over a hilly course--if one is available to you. The speed benefits of hill training are similar to those for interval training on the track. Select a hill about 400m long, but don't worry about the pitch or the exact distance. Run up hard, as hard as you might during a 400 track repeat. Then turn and jog back down, repeating the uphill sprints until finished.

If you plan to run a marathon with more downhill than uphill running, do some of your hill repeats down as well as up. This will condition your muscles to absorb the shock of downhill running. But don't overdo it; otherwise you'll increase your risk of injury.

### **Interval Training**

In training for an ultra marathon, long repeats (800,1600, or even longer) generally work better than short repeats (200, 400). I've prescribed 800 repeats for this programme, done every third week on Tuesdays. Run an 800 at faster-than- ultra marathon pace, rest by jogging and/or walking 400, then start again. I suggest that you run your 800 repeats using the same numbers as your marathon time. In other words, if you run a 2:17 marathon, you do the 800s in 2 min 17 sec minutes. A 3:10 marathoner does 3:10 repeats; 3:20 marathoner, 3:20 repeats, etc. The recovery between the intervals is again the same as the time you run those intervals. (e.g. a 3:40 marathoner runs the interval in 3 minutes 40 seconds, and has 3 Minutes 40 seconds active / easy jog before the next 800m)

### **Tempo Runs (Tem)**

A tempo run is a continuous run with a build up in the middle to near 10-K race pace. Notice I said "near" 10-K race pace. I define the peak pace for tempo runs at the pace you might run if racing flat-out for about an hour. That's fairly fast, particularly if the tempo run is 45 minutes long, but you're only going to be near peak pace for 3-6 minutes in the middle of the run. In the programme, tempo runs are scheduled for Tuesdays or Thursdays.

Here's how to do this workout. A tempo run of 30 to 40 minutes would begin with 10-15 minutes easy running, build to 10-20 minutes near the middle, then finish with 5-10 minutes easy running. The pace build up should be gradual, not sudden, with peak speed coming about two-thirds into the workout and only for those few minutes mentioned above.

You can do tempo runs almost anywhere: on the road or on a track. Tempo runs should not be punishing. You should finish refreshed, which will happen if you don't push the pace too hard or too long. It helps also to pick a scenic course for your tempo runs. You can do your tempo run with another runner, but usually it works better to run solo. There's less danger of going too slow or (more the problem) too fast if you choose his pace, not yours.

### **Race Pace**

Most of the Saturday runs are done at Race Pace. What do I mean by "Race Pace? Let me explain. Race Pace is the pace you plan to run in the race you're training for. If you're training for a 5 hour ultra marathon (50km), your average pace per kilometre is about 6 min. So you would run that same pace when asked to run Race Pace in this programme (sometimes stated simply as "Pace" - P). Don't forget to take the first one or two kilometres to warm into this pace, and allow the last km to be a gradual drop off in pace.

### **Races**

In most of my training programmes, I do not prescribe races. I don't want runners feeling that they are obligated to race on a specific weekend, and at a specific distance, because that's what the schedule says. But a certain amount of racing is good because it forces you to run at peak speed and provides feedback related to your fitness level.

### **Easy Runs**

Training on Mondays and Wednesdays should be done mostly at a comparatively easy pace. These are days of semi-rest, nevertheless, as the weekend mileage builds the weekday mileage also builds. Add up the numbers, and you'll see that you run only slightly more kilometres during the week as you do during long runs on the weekends. The programme is built on the concept that you do more toward the end than at the start.

### **Rest**

Rest is an important component of this or any training programme. Scientists will tell you that it is during the rest period (the 24 to 72 hours between hard bouts of exercise) that the muscles actually regenerate and get stronger. Coaches also will tell you that you can't run hard unless you are well rested. And it's the hard running that allows you to improve. If you're constantly fatigued, you will fail to reach your potential.

This is why I designate Friday as a day of rest. It allows you to gather forces for hard running on Saturdays and Sundays. If you need to take more rest days--because of a cold or a late night - do so. And if you're tired from the weekend, take Monday off as well--or cut the length of your Wednesday run.

The secret to success in any training program is consistency, so as long as you are consistent with your training during the full 18 weeks of the program, you can afford--and may benefit from--extra rest.

### **Race Strategy**

Eventually the day of the race comes, you are at the starting line, and someone says, "Go." You can have done all the right training but still blow the race. (Vice versa, the good news is that your training may have been lousy, but you can still pull it out with good race strategy.) More ultras are ruined in the first 32 km by impatience than in the last 18 by a lack of training. Forget the way you run a marathon, with the focus on km splits and maintaining your goal pace until the finish or the wall stops you. Let the faster runners go, even if you know you can keep up with them. Sure, you may be able to for 32 km, but then you will regret your exuberance.

Your focus should be on running and walking as smoothly and relaxed as possible. If you are looking at your watch, it should only be to remind you that it's time to walk, or time to for a drink, not time to hurry. If you find you are breathing hard, you should slow down. You should have no trouble carrying on a conversation. If you cannot, you are running much too fast. It may feel fine right then, but you will pay for it later.

It will feel very strange to slow down to a walk after only 20 minutes of leisurely running, but you will be thankful for it later in the day. Even just a couple of minutes of walking will loosen up your muscles and relax you. It will ensure that your running will feel leisurely for much longer than would otherwise be possible.

I don't think it is important exactly how often you walk, or what ratio there is between your walking and running. In any case, as the race goes on, you may wish to change the frequency of your walking breaks. The main thing is to walk early and walk often. If you do, you will pass the marathon point wondering what happened to the wall; with any luck, you will get to 50 km before any real pain sets in.

If you are the macho type who thinks walking is for sissies, well, that's all right. We need a few like you to get ahead at the start. Then when you crash and burn at 30 or 40 km, it will give us a real psychological lift to go cruising by. On the other hand, if you start slowly and just keep up the same pace, then you will pass many people in the last ten or 20 km.

### **Problems**

Despite your best intentions, some things will go wrong. In fact, some things will almost surely go wrong. Your stomach may rebel, you may get sore joints or blisters, or you may just get really tired. What can be done?

All of this is relevant ultra experience. Look back upon your successful run/walks as positive models for what to do; look back on the marathons where you hit the wall as models for what not to do. You may find that you have more experience than you think.

### **Route Type**

**Circular:** You run the first few kilometres alongside the dam and through the tunnel. Then you climb over Commando Nek. This is early in the race and should not pose any problems. From the top it is easy going as you cross the bridge over Hartbeespoort Dam. This is always a very beautiful stretch as the sun is rising by this stage. Then you have a steady climb through Broederstroom past Pelindaba. Here it can be very hot but the organisers go out of their way to assist you by having excellent water tables that offer all sorts of refreshments, such as fruit, ice lollies and even very miniature wors rolls!

Then, just like that famous race in the Cape, comes the mighty challenge at about 38km when you have to climb over Saartjiesnek. You may be forgiven if you think this is Constantia Nek, because the feeling is

just the same. At the top you are rewarded with a panoramic view of the dam and the town below. It is run in March in the North West, so be warned: it can get hot and you must drink!

**In conclusion**, 50 km is a long way and a sizable challenge, but it can be done and enjoyed by very ordinary runners. It is logical to think of it as a primarily physical challenge, but this misses the whole mental aspect. Being smart, rather than being macho, will make the event easier and more fun, even if your running buddies still think you are just macho.

I have not yet mentioned two other resources available to help you in your ultra. One is the amazing collection of feeding stations at this race. They spend many hours in your service, feeding, nursing, encouraging, and sometimes even cracking the whip when necessary. Just to help you reach your goal. The other resource is your fellow runners. In shorter races people compete against each other. In ultras they compete with each other, helping each other through the bad spells.

Enjoy your Om-Die-Dam. Most likely it will hurt, but that will only add to the memories.

Here is your training schedule. The below chart tells you what to do for each day for the 16 weeks leading to the ultra marathon. Starting in December 2009 and ending on Saturday 20 March 2010 at the Old Mutual Om Die Dam 50km

## Om die Dam 50km Marathon Training Schedule

Week	Date	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
16	30 Nov	10k	4 x 800 15 k E	30min T	rest	10 k P	24	
15	7 Dec	10k	5 x hill 5 k E	35min T	rest	12 k P	28(3/1)	
14	14 Dec	10k	35min T	10 k E	rest	rest	12 k E	32
13	21 Dec	10k	6 x 800 15 k E	30min T	rest	15 k P	16	
12	28 Dec	10k	7 x hill 5 k E	35min T	rest	10 k P	34(3/1)	
11	4 Jan	10k	40min T	12 k E	rest	rest	12 k E	28
10	11 Jan	10k	8 x 800 18 k E	40min T	rest	20 k P	42	
9	18 Jan	10k	9 x hill 7 k E	45min T	rest	15 k P	20	
8	25 Jan	10k	45min T	15 k E	15 k P	rest	17 k E	45(3/1)
7	1 Feb	10k	10 x 800	20 k E	45min T	rest	19 k P	20
6	8 Feb	10k	11 x hill	5 k E	50min T	rest	20 k P	45
5	15 Feb	10k	45min T	15 k E	15 k P	rest	10 k E	20
4	22 Feb	10k	12 x 800	20 k E	40min T	rest	20 k P	36 (3/1)
3	1 Mar	10k	15 x hill	10 k E	30min T	rest	6 k P	20
2	8 Mar	6k	30min T	6 k E	5 k P	rest	5 k E	12
1	15 Mar	5k	4 x 400 5 k E	rest	rest	<b>Race</b>		

P – Pace      E – Easy      T- Tempo

### Important Notice: Exclusion of Liability

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