

Coaching the 800/1500-1600

by **Manny Bautista**



When coaching the 800-1600, the coach must find the right combination of both speed and endurance for that particular athlete. The coach must first determine if that athlete is a 400/800 type or a 800/1600 type.

If your athlete is a 400/800 type, then they have good speed and handle short interval workouts well, but they don't handle the longer repetition type workouts as well. When working with 800 runners, in general, you don't need lots of time on the track. Remember, they only run 2 laps. The most important thing is to simulate parts of races in training. If you have a sophomore boy who you think can run under 2:00, then at some point that athlete has to get used to coming by the 400 in 58 seconds and keep going by the 600 in 1:28 at least.

Let's assume this athlete is a 400/800 type. Early in the season you might work this athlete on some long repetition type training such as 3-4 600's at date pace. Since the athlete has good speed, use dual meets to work on speed; run the athlete in the 400 and 4x400, maybe even a 200.

As you move into the middle of the season, you might add a workout known as the 500 meter drill. This workout is designed to help with the finishing sprint. The workout is set up this way: the coach is at the beginning of the straightaway, the athletes take off from there, run a complete lap (400 meters) then sprint to the finish. The coach determines the pace that they need to come by at, but it should be faster than race pace. Once the athlete passes the finish line they keep jogging around the track back to the coach (300 meter recovery) and start again. This is a pretty tough workout and the athlete only needs to do 4-6 of these.

As you move closer to the end of the season you can turn it up a notch. This next workout is known as the Russian workout; it was used by the Russian coaches back when they had a large number of women who could run under 2:00. It goes something like this: 5x200's at date pace with 45 seconds rest; after 5, you give the athlete 3:00 minutes recovery then you start again. The goal is a total of 15. This is a high lactate workout and should be modified to your athlete's ability level. The next time you do this workout you take the rest down to 30 seconds between each 200.

With an athlete that is a 800/1600 type, they can usually handle a bigger load in training, but they should still be trained with a speed emphasis. You may not run them in the 200 in a

dual meet, but you could run them in, say, a 1600 meters and 4x400. The workouts would be almost the same but they might do an extra rep or two.

Another question that comes up has to do with mileage for an 800 meter runner. As with all aspects of training, there are many different schools of thought on this. But, as a general rule, if you have the athletes run between 35-45 minutes on non-track days and about an hour on the long run day, that should do it

When training the 1500/1600 run many of the same principles apply. The athlete is training to race, therefore training must simulate racing to a large degree. Early in the season, a 1500/1600 runner would most likely do a larger volume of repetition type training. You can still include many things to simulate race type situations. For example, most high school races are not run at even pace. Most races are run at a varied pace, such as 62-68-69-66. In training, vary the pace; you might have your athletes do a couple of 200's at the beginning of the workout (600's) and finish with a few more 200's at faster than race pace.

As with the 800 meter runners, the 1500/1600 meter runner needs to be able to come through the halfway point in the race at a fast pace and not panic. If you are training an athlete to run a 4:20 mile, then they must be able to come by the 800 in under 2:10 and feel in control. There are several ways to accomplish this. Some examples of workouts would range from repeat 600's up to repeat 1200's, varying the pace within the distance the athlete is running. A distance that seems to work well early in the season for 1500/1600 runners is 1000 meters, 2 1/2 laps around the track. With this distance, a number of different things can be worked on--endurance, pace and even speed. The mileage for the 1500/1600 runner should be about 45 minutes to an hour on easy days and up to maybe an hour and a half on the long run day.

The most important factor of working with your 800-1600 athletes is to know your athletes. Find out what works for them, know their likes and dislikes when it comes to training. Most of all make sure the athlete always leave the track feeling positive.