

Avoiding Mistakes in Planning Your Season

It is the New Year. This is the time of year that finds many of us nursing hangovers but, once recovered, looking for new ways to elevate our fitness, health and performance.

It is so common to see good intentioned people begin the New Year in a frenzy of hope, optimism and motivation, only to lose enthusiasm after a few weeks as they succumb to fatigue, injury or loss of direction. So many of us seem to jump into fitness, without a clearly defined path or goal, and become lost and frustrated in just a few weeks.

It seems that, when considering our health and fitness, we are prone to lose the logic that we apply to so many areas of life. For example, no successful business simply operates without a plan and progression. They set a vision, a plan to achieve that vision, including budgets, strategies and periodic assessments of progress, then they implement the strategy. Perhaps this year you should consider applying that approach to your fitness.

I find that the most successful long-term fitness strategies involve a strong goal that acts as a *north star*. This is something that can act as a defining beacon of direction that allows all decisions for training to be based. There is no better type of goal in fitness than an event or race.

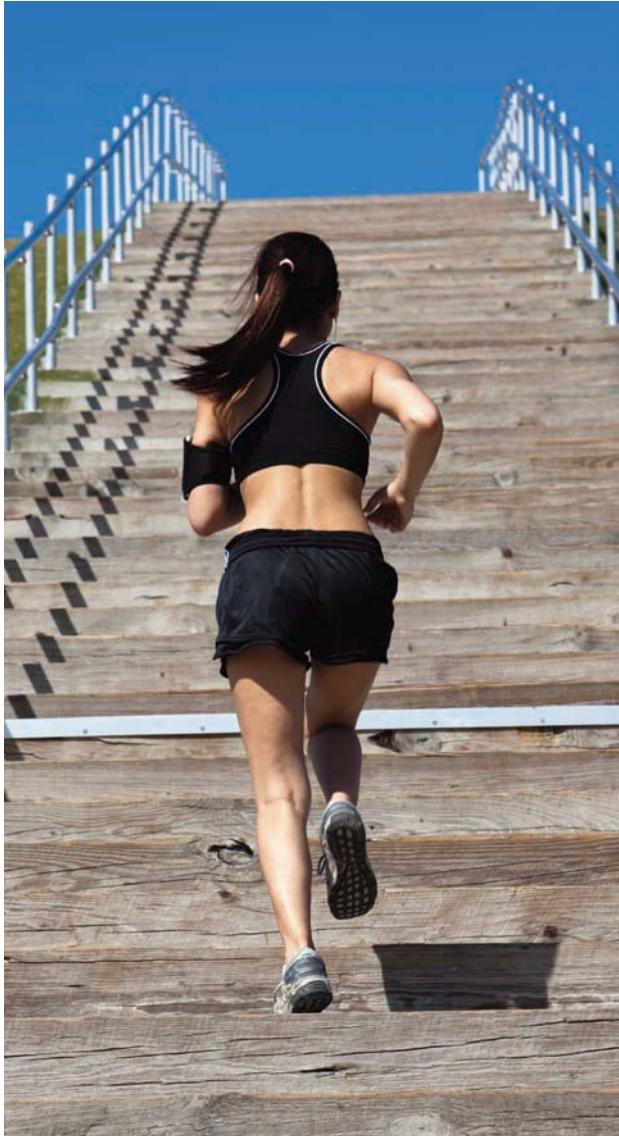
You do not have to be a competitive athlete to get rich reward from training for, and participating in, an event.

Even once an event is chosen, it is still common for many to fail to reach their goal. The failure can often be attributed to one of a few huge mistakes in either the choice of event, planning for the event or execution of the training. By understanding the most common mistakes, perhaps you can avoid the pitfalls and find success.

Mistake #1: Choosing the Wrong Event

An event too close, or a goal too big!

You will only find success if you choose an appropriate event.



The most critical component to choosing something is that it has to fit in with your current life. I see way too many people decide to take on an Ironman or, without consideration of if it is truly achievable with their commitments of work, family and life, or an honest assessment of their current state of fitness and health. A goal does not have to be a mammoth task. Before choosing your 'north star' take time to consider your life and how much real time and energy you can put to the goal.

Your event should also be far enough to allow for you to get fully prepared. Give yourself enough time to really *prepare* for the event, you will enjoy it more and gain greater results.

Mistake #2: Not Setting a Roadmap

Much as a business will set a business plan, you *have* to set a roadmap toward your event. This seems to be the single biggest mistake I see people make, including many professional and elite athletes. Much time is spent on setting event goals, and the subsequent excitement of obtaining that goal often obscures the need to plan ahead on how you will achieve that goal.

The result is that the training process begins with huge enthusiasm, but after a few weeks, as the body gets a little tired and the training is simply routine, the athlete becomes lost.

By setting a clear path of *progression*, and creating specific phases of training, you will ensure that you not only continually progress in your training, but also maintain an eye on your north star. By knowing where you are, where you have come from, and where you need to go, you obtain power and you obtain confidence.

Mistake #3: Not Using the Roadmap

It seems simple, but just creating a roadmap will do nothing unless you truly use that map to guide the way. To succeed, you should place a series of checkpoints on the roadmap, a time to review the last phase of training and assess if there are any changes needed

to the master map. You can then set up the upcoming phase of training, with a purpose and direction that keeps you on path toward your event.

Mistake #4: Ignoring Progression

The key benefit of maintaining a training roadmap is that it allows you the ability to truly plan progression in your training, and see the journey ahead. So many people begin way too hard in their training, pushed through enthusiasm and high motivation. One of the key elements to successful training, but one most often ignored, is progression. In the early phase of your roadmap you should almost *underwhelm* yourself with your training. *Patience is the key to consistency, and consistency is the biggest factor to improvement.*

Progression occurs through the volume (time spent) training, as well as the intensity of your training. It is also relevant to the *type* of training. For example, if your goal event is to complete a half marathon event in the spring, we are aware of the need to improve cardiovascular fitness to be able to run the 13.1-mile distance.

What many fail to consider is that, in order to successfully train for and complete that distance, you *have* to be structurally prepared to cope with the running miles. I find that *most* runners have muscular-skeletal systems that are inadequately prepared to cope with the rigors of running training. This is one reason why over-use injuries are so common.

Progression, in this case, would involve a full core/stability/mobility program to prepare the body for increases in running. This cannot be rushed, and it cannot be skipped. Your running training would then be slowly ramped up in synergy with your increasing functional stability, allowing long-term gains and better results.

Mistake #5: Skipping the Recovery

I left the biggest until last. The single biggest mistake made in training for an event is getting overly tired. This comes from an accumulation of training and stress without adequate recovery.

There is no bigger killer of enthusiasm than fatigue. Also, most over-use injuries occur because of inadequate recovery and rest. For my athletes recovery truly sits at the very *core* of the training plan. Even for highly competitive athletes, at least two days per week are set aside to facili-

tate recovery and adaptation.

I observe many people talking about recovery, and how it is so important, but seldom see people truly follow through by programming it in the plan. It always seems to be the very first thing to get dropped, mostly as it provides little validation or confidence toward the goal.

By placing a priority on recovery, and programming it into your weekly plan, you will have a greater chance of consistency, will have less injury risk, and should not accumulate unnecessary fatigue that kills the enjoyment.

Despite what the media tells you, training does not have to be all suffering. I believe arriving at an event *fit and fresh*, not fit and tired.

Enjoy the Journey

There is no better way to truly gain consistency and long-term fitness results than entering an event and taking the journey toward it. I should point out though that the true rewards are not just about the day of the event, and finishing well. Rich rewards really come from embracing the process and enjoying the journey. You will really find a lot out about yourself if you follow a path, stay consistent, and finish with an event. If you choose wisely, and stay with it, it will open up a whole new world of experience that will stagger you with what you can achieve.

The road toward the goal must be fun, make sure you get to share it with others and make it enjoyable. It does not have to be about suffering to be successful.

Over the coming months I will be exploring and sharing strategies to improve your fitness and health, and help you find performance. The journey to performance is one with great rewards, and if you stay logical and smart, it is actually pretty simple. <<

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