



Fairlands Valley Spartans Running Club

UK's Best Running Club 2010

Affiliated to UK Athletics and the Association of Running Clubs

'Catch a Coach' ~ newsletter

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Catch a Coach newsletter

Welcome to another edition of Catch a Coach, the monthly newsletter from the coaching team at Fairlands Valley Spartans.

After the disruption during January because of the snow and ice it now feels like we are getting back into the swing of things again!! We have a packed and hugely varied training programme that has been set up for the period to the end of April by the coaching team.

One of the key points of focus for the forthcoming programme is the midweek league series. As I write this we are waiting to hear confirmation of fixtures and are hopeful that we can host the first 10K race in Stevenage around the middle of May. The club's training programme, therefore, has a keen eye on this and incorporates a mixture of traditional interval training with tempo paced runs and hill training to develop strength, speed and running technique. During the February to April period one of our coaches, Bernie Barnaby, will be offering a series of sessions that focus on speed and running technique using short intervals. These sessions are progressive so runners will get the most from the training if they can complete the programme over the coming months.

As ever the challenge for the coaching team is to offer a programme that is balanced and appeals to the breadth of the membership. It is NOT an individual training programme but it is a programme that can be used by all to satisfy their training objectives. Look out for further details on the midweek league fixtures and all important information on how the league works in next month's edition.

All of the details of the club's training programme can be found by going to the training programme drop down option on the Club Calendar tab on the club website (<http://www.fvspartans.org.uk/calendar-all/old-style-calendar/>). In addition, the club calendar has a wealth of details on races, so you can start to plan your running and racing programme early.

I would like to say a huge thank you to all members of the coaching team who continue to do a superb job in delivering a varied and challenging training programme for the club.

Enjoy your training and racing and remember.....don't leave your race on the training ground!!!

Cheers

Coach Leigh

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What's coming up – 10 of the best for February

Here are our 10 of the best for February:

1. Great turnout last month for the Royston cross country. Let's see if we can get an even bigger turnout for the final fixture of this year's league on the 17th February in Cassiobury Park, Watford. Details are on the cross country forum board for car sharing and meeting arrangements.
2. On 10th February we have our 5 mile and 10 mile handicap races. All of the details are on the Forum under the FVS events page, including target times and start times. Come along and get involved!!!
3. On Thursday 21st February we will be running the second of our handicap 5K races. Details of target times will be added to the Forum shortly. This is a great way to benchmark your current levels of fitness and see how your training is going, even after the snow/ice hiatus in January!
4. On Tuesday 12th February we will be starting a series of speed development sessions using short 90 second intervals with 1 min recoveries. These will include a set of running drills (which we plan to include in more of our sessions going forward) and focus on developing your running technique and speed in the build up to our midweek league campaign starting in May. The sessions will be repeated at 4-5 week intervals and will be progressive, so we start with 8 x 90 secs on the 12th February then progress to 12, 16 and finally 20 repeats during March and April. The sessions are suitable for all abilities of runner within the club. Completing the series of training sessions will give you the most benefit and see you flying by the middle of May!
5. There is a great variety in our track training programme on Saturday mornings, catering for a wide range of training objectives. The sessions start at 9:15am with a warm up and then a series of running drills (if repeated regularly these really improve your running technique and, in turn, your running performance). We then complete the main running session before finishing with an appropriate warm down and static stretching. For those who have not been track training before, there is no compulsion to complete the whole session! Just come along and join in the warm up and drills and run a few of the programmed efforts before stretching off. You can see what the session is all about and have fun doing it.

6. On 28th February we will be holding the popular 20:20 out and back session. This gives us a chance to develop our tempo pacing over a longer distance/time. Details on this can be found at : <http://www.fvspartans.org.uk/2012/04/15/tempo-training/>
7. The first of a series of hill based training sessions are being held on Thursday 7th February. These are based around a series of 200m efforts up a hill at pace with longer recoveries. Using this combination will develop your running speed, technique and overall strength. The sessions will be repeated at 4-5 week intervals and will be progressive in terms of the number of hill repeats. Look out for the series of sessions within the training programme.
8. Spring marathon and half marathon training is now in full swing and we have Sunday morning club runs for all abilities organized to help increase your long runs up to 17 miles. Keep an eye on 'What's On' and the 'Sunday Runs' message board on the forum for details of meeting places and times.
9. There is a wealth of races available to enter that support a wide range of objectives. Popular races include the Baldock half on the 24th and the Stamford 30K or Bramley 20m & 10m on the 17th but don't forget the St Albans park runs each Saturday morning if you are looking for a shorter race. All of the details are within the club's calendar available through the website.
10. It has been said that we only have our hill sessions on a Thursday evening. Wrong! On a Tuesday evening our sessions incorporate a mixture of hills within the session. It is very hard to find a flat stretch in Stevenage, particularly close to our training base at Marriotts. In fact, Marriotts is at the one of the highest points in Stevenage, so we are lucky. Nevertheless, look out for the specific hill reps that we will be building into our Tuesday sessions starting from Tuesday 19th February.

Enjoy your training and racing!

Race results - a reminder

Please remember to tell us all about your race results so that we can cover them within our weekly press release!!! **Send them in to results@fvspartans no later than 8pm Sunday evening for inclusion in the weekly press release.**

Remember: if you are feeling unwell in any way during or after your run please make sure that you speak to a member of your groups coaching team. They need to be aware of this so that they can monitor the situation during training.

If you are feeling unwell before the training session then you are advised not to run.



Coach development

Best of luck to Jan Fry, Trudie Molloy, Rachel Payne and Tracy Pez who will be attending the Leadership in Running and Fitness course at Hatfield on 17th February.

What's new on the Site

Here's a taster of the new features/articles that have hit our website over the last month. Why don't you have a catch up!

<http://www.fvspartans.org.uk/2013/01/>

Sarah Millac's Nottingham Marathon

I wanted to share the following article that was written by Bernie Barnaby following the coaching he completed with Sarah Millac at St Albans. It highlights that there is more than one way to prepare for a marathon and that the training programme you use has to work for YOU. Clearly this approach was very successful for Sarah.

One April Tuesday evening during a track session I was discussing Marathon training. I mentioned, according to the theory in Galloway's Book on running, that it should be possible to train for a marathon on 3 or 4 days running a week. Sarah immediately decided that this was what she wanted. With a husband, two children and a job, time was at a premium.

Research has shown you need at least 3 days running per week for sustained improvement. 1 or 2 days do comparatively little for you. At 3 days the improvement curve rises dramatically. Over 95% aerobic capacity is gained in training 4-5 days a week. Over 5 days there is much greater risk of injury, so 5 days or less is ideal.

The marathon training was to be similar to that which I have used for others in the club. 4 weeks of hills followed by a combination of long runs and mile reps. The basic club speed work was also to be done. To keep running interesting, club races were included in the program. Others previously had filled the gaps in the program with other runs but Sarah was to do the minimum.

During the first 4 weeks hill reps were done to build leg strength for the speed phase to follow. These started at 8 x 1 minute and increase by 2 each week to 14. Sarah could not get to the club for the first 3 sets so she did them on a treadmill.

After years of running mile reps I find them relaxing. A set of 13 takes about 2 1/2 hours. I tend to run with a radio which helps. This was the first time Sarah had built up reps so she did a second set of 11 rather than the final 13. The first set of 4 miles was done at the beginning of May. These were followed by sets of 5, 7, 9, 11 and a final set of 11 in September. On the later sets we both listened to the radio, Sarah to Radio 4 and me to Mercury FM.

Other club members did part of the long runs with us. This helped pass the time especially on the longer runs. The runs up to 20 (3 hours) went without problems. Both of us would rather race hard over shorter distances than plod on for hours. Because of this we both started the 3 1/2 hour run with negative thoughts. We probably went too fast to start especially considering how hot it was. We had had enough at 2 hours and

we only managed the 3 hours because we had to get back. The training had to be adjusted so we decided on a final 3 1/2 hour run rather than 4. We went off slower and with a more positive attitude. We completed this but both decided we would concentrate on distances less than 1/2 marathon in the future. The long runs were 12, 16+, 17+, 21+, 21+ and finally 25+. The reasoning behind running near to or over distance is so the body is ready to run 26 miles in the race. The race is not the ideal time to do your longest run. Those who hit the wall at 20 are usually the ones whose longest run is 20. I equate it to running 5 mile long runs to train for a 10k.

During the period Sarah did 7 races, Stevenage 10k (41.21), St. Albans 1/2M (1hr31min), St. Albans 7 (47.30), Race for Life 5K (21.20), Club Champs 6K (25.09), Golden Mile (5.47) and Verlea X/C relay. Over the years many runners have refused to race as they had to do another long run. These races are useful time trials necessary if the runner wants improved times.

At the end of the training period the only important runs are the last long run for endurance and the last set of mile reps for speed. The others before were a tool for building up. The key marathon sessions were 6 long runs and 6 sets of mile reps. A long run and a set of mile reps was done approximately every three weeks.

During the last 2 weeks you cannot improve fitness. You can, however, tire yourself out by running too much. Continuing with the minimalist approach Sarah only ran 4 times during the Tapering period.

The work is done during the months of training before the Marathon. The race is to prove the training. Sarah's aim was to run under 3:30. She started comfortably and ran the more interesting first half in 1:43. The second half is flatter but with long boring straights. Without the company of the half marathon runners it was just a case of concentrating on keeping going. Sarah said that at 24 miles she started to feel tired but she kept strong to finish in 3 hours 27 minutes 30 seconds. The second half was done in 1:44.

Sarah had done a PB by about 15 minutes. She also said she felt better after the race than on previous Marathons. Although tired she did not feel the need to collapse on the sofa for the next week. Sarah on average had run 3.25 times a week, with a maximum weekly mileage of about 35. Since the Marathon Sarah has got back into training and has had 2 excellent runs in the Met X/C league, a PB in the first Stevenage 5K (19.50) and a PB in the Stortford 10 (69.20).

Top tips



Try setting your alarm for a sleep time that is a multiple of 90 minutes. That's the length of the average sleep cycle so you're less likely to be interrupted during deep sleep.



Stress weakens your immune system so try not to run intense sessions during particularly stressful weeks. These will leave your body doubly vulnerable to illness.



Working on your balance and coordination not only makes you a more stable efficient runner (running is after all a series of single leg leaps) but it also helps you avoid falls. Exercises are easy to work into your daily routine. Stand on one leg and use your non dominant hand to pour coffee, brush your teeth or butter your toast (the list is endless!). Tighten your stomach muscles and keep the working knee slightly bent, not locked. Advanced balancers can stand on one leg with arms out to the side for at least 10 seconds with eyes open and then at least another 10 seconds with their eyes closed.

Quote of the month

'I will always listen to my coaches. But first I listen to my body. If my body doesn't feel good with what they say, then always my body comes first.'

Haile Gebrselassie

The long run

How long should your long run be? Should you go 'over distance?'. I have reproduced an article below written by Bernie Barnaby that recommends using over distance runs right the way through our race distance range. Its particularly thought provoking in relation to the marathon distance but also, how many of you run a long run of 15-16 miles before a half marathon?

Over the years I have always run over distance long runs. Jeff Galloway says race day is not the time to do your longest run. I have always accepted that. When I ran my best times I used to run 20 mile long runs for races less than half marathon. My race day would consist of 2 miles warming up including strides, then the race followed by over 2 miles warming down. For a half marathon that would be over 17 miles. The warming up enabled me to start at race pace rather than warm up in the early miles and I was always strong at the end when others struggled. Between 1987 and 1989 I completed about 15 half marathons all under 1:20. My best half marathon was 75.45 at St. Neots and best 10 mile 55.25 at Welwyn.

Most of us will do over distance runs for race distances up to half marathon. The question of running over distance only appears to be a problem for marathons. The maximum long run done by marathon runners seems to be somewhere between 20 and 30.

In an attempt to sort out the truth I decided to read as much about the subject as I could. After attacking libraries, bookshops and Ed's and Jack's shelves I found no definite answer.

A track based book suggested running as many miles a week as possible, and that two runs a day were better than one long run if the total miles were more. This book was quickly discarded. Others tell of the benefits of the long run and then print schedules with long runs of over 20 miles with no explanation why.

Delving through the better books, the following four points emerged:

1. The cardio-vascular endurance has possibly progressed sufficiently by the time the runner is capable of 20 mile runs and any further is unlikely to bring further improvement.
2. After 20 miles muscular endurance is still being developed.
3. Running over distance gives psychological confidence that the runner can complete the distance. This benefit is hard to measure and will vary depending on the runner.
4. The body has enough glycogen to run 18 to 20 miles. Over this distance the body has to use fat. Long runs above 20 will help develop this fat burning energy system. Some suggest hitting the wall at 20 miles is when the glycogen runs out.

Danielle Sanderson told me she felt better in the last few miles of the marathon after she did over distance long runs in training. When Eamonn Martin visited us last July he told us he did 25 mile long runs. Richard Nerurkar does the same but did note other runners would run over 26. He said more advanced runners would do 4 to 5 runs over 20 miles. His coach advised increasing long runs, totalling at least 100 miles over the build up period. Ian Thompson (1974 Commonwealth and European Marathon Gold medalist) would run 30 mile long runs. He said they gave him a lot of confidence and he always knew he would make the distance. Club runners' views were varied. Many who did 20 miles maximum did suffer the last 6 in the race and some appeared to believe

they had to. Those who approached or went over distance were most likely to be the ones who felt strong to the end.

Comparing my schedule based on Jeff Galloway's ideas with an equivalent number of 20 milers, even on maximums, my last four long runs would be 21, 25, 27 and 30. That would be only 23 miles more over a 4 month training period. The possible benefits of improved muscle endurance, psychological confidence for race distance and development of the fat burning energy system far out-weigh any risks.

My view after this research is that the final long run before the marathon should be at least 24 miles. But my advice would be to run at least one over distance and one of distance or slightly below, as a minimum. These runs should be done at a pace 1.5 to 2 minutes slower than your present 10k pace.



Feedback

Members of the coaching team really value feedback from members of the club. Feedback enables us to adjust training sessions and also create brand new ones!

Whilst we think we are taking the correct steps in the design and delivery of the sessions, without your feedback we don't entirely know! The way in which you give feedback doesn't have to be particularly formal. Just a quick word with the coach after the session has finished is enough. If you would prefer to put it in writing after further thought then go ahead and drop the team a line at catchacoach@fvspartans.org.uk

We listen to all comments and it is a real help when we look at the forthcoming training schedules and sessions.

Thank you