
Peaking for Major Competitions

ASA Level 3

Specialist Event:

800m

(middle distance)

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Curriculum Vitae

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Occupation: Athletics Organizer at Hoërskool Jeugland Kempton Park

Age group of athletes being coached: 11- 22 years

At school I ran the 1500m with a personal best of 3:55 in 1988. I competed in the Comrades Marathon and various other marathons. Running is a passion. During this time I only had a coach in 1987- 88.

I started coaching career in 1999 with my stepdaughter, age 11. She became the SA junior champion in the 800m in 2007. Other kids joined the training group and I discovered my passion for children and coaching, and to see the difference that sport makes in a child's life.

I read mostly books on coaching to develop my coaching style. Johan Steinberg, Angela Wagner's coach, taught me a great deal that led to my success as a

coach. I read everything that I could put my hand on about coaching middle distances and sprint events. I made sure that I understood the biomechanics and the science of running. Knowledge became my power. It became an obsession as I realized that coaching is an art, it is a constant form of planning and evaluation. I realize that I never will reach the point where I will say “Now I know everything”. I am still learning each day of my life.

I worked in the private sector until 2008, and then I started in 2009 at Hoërskool Jeugland where I am at present the middle distance coach and athletics organizer.

Some of my recent athletes include:

- **Anet Coetzee** ASA junior Champ **800m** 2007 **1st 2min09**
- **Rizani van Aswegen** ASA youth **800m** 2009 **4th 2min11**
- **Megan Williams** ASA junior **800m** 2009 **4th 2min11**
- **Mikyla Ferreira** SA Schools 2010 **800m** u15 **2nd**
- **Anrune Liebenberg** SA Schools 2010 **800m** u19 **3rd**
- **Rainier Horak** ASA **X-country** 2009 u15 **2nd**
- **Stiaan Steyn** SA Schools 2010 u17 **400m H** **5th pb 53,9s**

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1. *INTRODUCTION*

- To be successful in peaking for major competitions is to me as coach as rewarding as to my athlete. Failing to peak for major competition can destroy a whole macro cycle of training, demoralize the coach and most of the time brings doubt to the athlete to his/her self believe towards his/her ability to be a successful athlete.

- Peak? According to the Jutas School dictionary the word peak is the pointed top of a hill. Thus being on your sharpest when it matters most! Achieving your set goal on the day.

- How often does it happen that our athletes run bad times when instead they should have peaked?

2. AIM OF THE STUDY

- The aim of the study is to establish and identify the most important factors contributing to insure peak performance.

- To research and find out what other coaches experienced during successful preparation for major competitions.

- To share my own knowledge and experiences when preparing for major competition.

3. *DISCUSSIONS ON TOPIC*

- So how do I prepare for major competition? Does training make you perfect? NO NO NO!! Perfect training, however, makes perfect!
- The whole basis of preparing for major competition is thorough planning. Not planning in your mind but sitting down with your athlete and putting pen to paper. To have a clear and well designed training plan.
- It is also important to understand that peaking does not necessary mean winning a gold medal or any medal for that matter, but to me as coach, rather to run a personal best time – this in fact proves that the athlete gave his/her best performance. There are 3 medals in a race but all the athletes can run a personal best time!
- Successful peaking therefore can be described as achieving the set goal in the race.
- What works for me?

2. Understanding the language of periodization

- ❖ Macro cycle – In middle distance racing we normally have 2 macro cycles. One for track and field athletics and one for cross-country running, thus a macro cycle is the planning on a specific code in sports.

- ❖ Messo cycle – Training over a period of time from 6-8 weeks with a special focus on for example –general preparation – specific preparation – pre competition – competition or major competitions.

- ❖ Micro cycle – Training over one week or 7 days

Using this structure I work out my annual plan and can clearly plot and prepare for major competitions. I use the micro cycle training program as in **figure 2**.

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Athlete Name: _____ Age: ____ Male/Female Training Age: ____
 Events: _____ Best Performances: _____
 Previous year's best performance: _____

Annual Plan	Single / Double / Multi						
Period	Preparation / Competition						
Phase	General preparation / Specific preparation / Pre-competition / Competition						
Mesocycle	Mesocycle # __						
Microcycle	Microcycle # __						Volume: __kms
Days	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Details of session							
Training emphasis							
Loading Rest/Low/Medium/High							

Figure 2. Micro Cycle Training Program Sheet

The focus of each mesocycle is as follows:

1. General preparation

Aerobic endurance – high. Power –high, Plyometrics-high, Rhythm, core and general functional strength –high. General overloading of energy systems result in adaptation of work load. Quantity not quality. Duration - 8 weeks.

2. Specific preparation

Training emphasis shifts to specific event for example 800m. Identifying the energy systems and also the percentage that they are involved in this event example 800m + 65% anaerobic and 35% aerobic.

Exercise must include the stimulation of these energy systems at race pace. Muscle endurance. Medium quantity high quality exercise. Normally track work done at 2-3 times of racing distance. Duration - 8 weeks.

3. Pre-competition

Speed endurance –a lactic speed running of time trails, testing to see whether everything is still on target, running of league races. High Quality low volume. Racing tactics. Regeneration of muscles. Mental Preparation. Constant communication between coach and athlete and incorporating exercise to correct any shortcomings that the athlete may experience during races. Duration - 4 weeks.

4. Competition

Low volume maintaining race form, make sure that there is no overtraining done, athlete must not be tired but eager to race. Focus on goal times strategy to overcome opposition. Plan every race. Perfect mental state. In this period care should be taken that the athlete's body is in a perfect state of anabolism before competing. Stick to your routine don't try any new stuff during this Period.

Anabolism – Regenerated state of muscles, no lactic, ATP stores filled up. Body ready to respond to race stimulation. Glycogen stored in liver and muscle cells.

Homeostasis – Comfort zone of body – Rested state

Catabolism – Breaking down of muscles – overloading due to high training volumes, state of stress.

NB- I found that my athletes can only stay in peak condition for major competitions up to 3 weeks before I must return to stimulate the necessary energy systems with some specific preparation in order to peak for further competitions. Thus the competition phase will normally be 3 weeks and 2 weeks major competition.

5. IMPORTANT FACTORS

Mental preparation – Make sure your athlete is not mentally stressed out, the athlete needs to focus on his own game plan. The athlete needs to be calm and relaxed.

The 10 deadly mistakes athletes make with their pregame attitude

1. Placing strict expectations on your performance

If you don't achieve your predetermined expectations, you tend to question your ability.

2. Leaving self confidence to chance

If you have a high level of belief in your ability, you will not become anxious. What happens if you start the competition with errors? You want a proactive approach to confidence –not a reactive approach.

3. Getting distracted by the hoopla of the game

The media can jump on all the stories and expose every nugget of information about athletes and coaches. Don't let this distract you from your real mission.

4. Carrying life's worries into the race.

Some athletes might have daily live hassles like paying bills, worrying about family issues; one goal of mental preparation is the ability to separate your life from sports.

5. Overtraining before competition

Make sure that your body is in state of anabolism
Worrying too much about results

6. The fear of what your parents or coach might think of you if you fail or don't achieve your goals

7. No race plan

Never enter a competition without a race plan or strategy.

8. Psyching yourself out before competition

Do not place too much emphasis on other competitors; your confidence can quickly go down the drain if you make comparisons to other athletes who you think are better than you.

9. Worrying too much about what others think

If you crave approval from others, you are more likely to become afraid to fail in competition.

10. Allowing fear of failure to be the top motivator

Fear of failure occurs when athletes are motivated by not losing or not making mistakes.

6. *TOP SIX OBJECTIVES*

- ✓ Feel prepared and ready
- ✓ Feel confident in one's skills
- ✓ Focus on execution
- ✓ Prepare to cope with adversity
- ✓ Finalize a race plan
- ✓ Fully accept the role of an athlete

7. *CONCLUSION*

- To ensure that your athlete peaks at a major competition is not just waking up over the last week of training before a major competition and do a bit of tapering and hold thumps that he might have a great race.
- It comes over a long period of time preparing, planning and training as perfect possible for the specific event and competition that leads and result in success for the coach and athlete at major competitions.
- Never underestimate the mental preparation for major competitions, it's often in this department that athletes get stressed out and fail.
- Don't over train in the major competition phase make sure your athlete is in top physical and physiological state.

8. BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Pieter Labuschagne –NA- Atlet en afriger
- Patrick J. Cohn- NA- Peaksports.com Special report
- Lee E. Brown & Vance Ferigno –NA -Speed Agility and Quickness
- Wayne le Moore- NA - the language of periodization
- Willie Engelbrecht – Own practical experiences

9. SAMPLE OF FINAL WEEK OF PREPARATION

Anet Coetzee participated in the 2007 SASSU competition.

During the student games in Durban she ran a PB 1500m 4min38 and on the next day heats a PB 800m 2min09 with strong winds. Date of competition 30-31 March 2007

March 22nd 2007

200m-29s 30sec rest 300m -44sec 8min rest 500m-1min18sec 8min rest
300m-44sec 30sek rest 200m – 32sec

March 23rd 2007

Circuit training and physical exercise

March 24th 2007

5x150m 18, 5-18-9sec long recovery in between

March 25th 2007

6km – 30min recovery

March 26th 2007

1000m – 1min 57

Rest 8min

600m -1min 50 rest 1min 400m 73sec

March 27th 2007

Jog 20min easy

March 28th 2007

Rhythm

March 29th 2007

Rest

March 30th 2007

1500m – 4min38 pb

March 31st 2007

800m heats 2min15sek

800m final 2min09 sec PB

2 weeks later she won ASA junior 800m title.

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