

# The First Month of Track and Field

## "10 Great Workouts for Sprinters"

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Getting the track season off to a good start is critical for the **success** in late May of your sprinters. Keeping your sprinters healthy can be difficult enough, yet dodging the rain, snow, wind and the fast paced lives the kids live, lack of quality sleep, things kids eat today, can often times make things more difficult in late February and early March. Remember there are no state championships or league championships in February or March. March is a great month to lay a solid **sprint** foundation. So what can be done to assure maximum success with your sprinters and get them ready for May?



### **Some initials thoughts.**

Always plan from the championship meet backwards, Plan from May back to February or March. Once you have arrived at the first month planning of your season, it will be essential to plan out a direction for the athlete that will enable them to positively progress throughout the

13 week season remaining injury free. Each athlete will be unique and bring different fitness levels to the first day of practice. This fact should be included in the workouts. Some will be arriving from other sports, others will not. Just because it's written down, doesn't mean it's written in stone. Like aspirin, more is not better. Also, limit the lactate workouts. Nothing will tear up a sprinter more than early high levels of lactate work, especially early in the season. Be sure and ask yourself how much lactate that sprint really involves. 100 meters has virtually no lactate, while the 400 has quite a fair amount of lactate once the runner hits the 40 second mark. Do **not** road run your sprinters. Nothing will kill foot speed and muscle elasticity quicker than road running and countless lactate workouts, not to mention the gait in road running does nothing but mess up a sprinters gait. Road running does **not** build a base for sprinters.

### **Here are some great workouts for that first month of practice.**

1. Take the first two or three days to teach a proper dynamic warm up. Depending on the fitness level of your athletes, this may be **their** workout. If the weather is not cooperating, stay inside and go through the dynamic warm up in the gym. It's difficult to teach someone who's more concerned about how cold they are than how they are performing the drill. Pound in those good running mechanics when they are in a warm environment to get them to really listen to you.

2. Use a day during the first week of practice for a chalk talk. This will be time well invested in goal setting, talking about proper sleep, nutrition, and academics. Encourage them to keep a training log. It's powerful to be able to look by at workouts and how you felt each day, to monitor one's own progress. This is another great way to get athletes to buy in to the workouts by monitoring them in a training log. This is time well spent that could save both you and the athlete headaches as the season progresses. This may be the day when you can see the athletes really need to be off the track for recovery.



3. 6-9 x 30 meter flys, with a 4 minute recovery between each. Have the athletes accelerate over 20 meters to top speed for 30 meters. (total distance covered will be 50 meters with the athlete running at max for 30 meters) Again, 4 minutes will be needed to completely recover the system so they are ready for the next 30 meters. The athlete may feel they are ready before the 4 minute recovery is up. Encourage them to take the full 4 minute recovery so the system

can completely recover. The fly 30's are done at maximal effort. Wait 72 hours before repeating this workout.

4. Tempo work (run at 60% to 80%) aids and facilitates recovery while minimizing the chance of injury. Two or three days of tempo work early can help keep the athlete injury free. Tempo runs not only improve recovery but over time enhance capillarization of the muscle, leading to an increased heating of motor neurons in the muscle. This heating lowers the electrical resistance in the neural pathways within muscle, thus improving the muscle's contraction speed. Distances can range from 100 to 400 meters. Recovery between reps should be a pulse of 120-140 and recovery between sets should be 5 to 10 minutes. The key as a coach, will be reigning in the athlete and making sure they stay inside the 60% to 80% effort. Any workout done under 60 meters at maximal effort will benefit greatly from a tempo workout following it the next day.

5. Relay attacks are one of the best early season relay handoff practices that can be done with no baton. We've all struggled with athletes going in and out of the zone and backing off. This is a death sentence for a great hand-off. Have the outgoing runner mark their go mark. Then have them move that mark 30 inches closer to the end of the zone, toward themselves. It'll appear the incoming runner will run up the outgoing runner. Now make sure the lane is divided in 1/2 with each runner staying on their side of the zone. **No baton is needed.** Have the incoming runner come at the outgoing runner as if it were a normal handoff. Instead of handing off, it will end up being a race to a pre-determined mark, 40 meters down the track. Once the incoming runner hits the adjusted go mark, the outgoing runner takes off and it's a race down the track, some 40 meters. If you've had problems with runners backing off through the zone at any point, this should solve it. Insert the baton a week or so later and adjust back the go mark once the baton is re-inserted. Only allow a couple attempts at each zone and remind the athletes that this is a highly intense workout and not an easy day. Allow 4 minutes between each run and make sure this relay practice and your next one is 72 hours apart. Keep this practice away from the 30 meter flys also. This workout along with the 30 meter flys is unlikely to injure an athlete as long as they are properly warmed up, dressed appropriately for the weather and rested properly. Injuries often have nothing to do with the workout and everything to do with improper stimulus or workloads leading up to the workout as well as inadequate recovery and restoration.



6. A technical work day built in early is very important. Video tape the athlete and let them see what they look like. Many of your sprinters are highly visual and seeing it and hearing it is much more effective than just hearing a correction that needs to be made. Take video on the straight away and on the corners.

7. Acceleration work from a stand, falling or out of the blocks. Again, this is very intense and should not be looked at as an easy day. Take the acceleration out to 50 to 60 meters to develop a good acceleration pattern. Follow this workout with some standing long jumps or standing triple jumps. The acceleration work and the short jumps are highly compatible.

8. Pool workouts are great for restoration and can aid in helping with increased dynamic mobility work. After a 20-30 swim workout, have the athlete go through some joint range of motion work.



9. Go through a pre-meet routine with all athletes. Talk to them about inclement weather and how best to make sure a proper warm up is done and how to re-warm up for the next event. Talk about re-focusing after another athlete false starts and how to focus at meets. Teaching how to focus is a skill that has to be taught not something the athletes can be told to do. Go through everything that could possibly go wrong and have a plan. Discuss what to eat, when to

eat it and what not to eat. Never take for granted the importance of discussing the importance of hydration. Energy drinks vs. Water vs. Protein Drinks!

10. The very best workout in that first month, may be a DAY OFF. Not only for the physical, but many athletes benefit from a mental day off. It's much more difficult to recharge the mental battery than the physical one.

Some ***myths*** about early March sprint training:

1. It's important to build a base by doing some distance running. Wrong! This is a great way to kill foot speed and alter a good sprint gait. If you want to sprint fast, you have to sprint. Again, the key will be proper rest after the workout.
2. If I sprint my athletes in March, they'll get hurt. Wrong! This is only the case if the athlete aren't warmed up, aren't dressed correctly for the weather or aren't rested correctly. 48 to 72 hours of rest from sprinting is essential. There is no cutting corners on this one.
3. Running relay or block work is a rest day. Wrong! These types of workouts are extremely intense and require 48 to 72 hours of rest.

As a coach, a properly trained or slightly undertrained athlete is much more productive in the long run than an injured athlete. Coach on the safe side if there is any doubt. Listen to the athlete and observe their body language. Today's athlete have so many "outside of track stimuli" that could take a toll both mentally and physically. It's never been more important as a coach to be really tuned in to the athlete. It's much easier to see physical fatigue than mental fatigue in an athlete. Both however, can doom the athletes success.

The first month is your foundation. Built from the foundation up, with the right materials (workouts), all 10 workouts play an important part in laying the foundation for a successful season and shouldn't be overlooked.

**"You can have the will to be great, but you must have the will to prepare to be great!"**

*Coach Hoddle is the director of the Northwest Track and Field Clinic held on Feb. 6 and 7, 2013 at the SeaTac Double Tree, featuring Tony Volpentest, Fastest Amputee in the world.*