

Gold Coast Runners



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CLUB MISSION: *The purpose of the Gold Coast Runners is to promote, encourage, and support the sport of running and walking through a network of people and resources engaged to educate the community on the benefits of the sport.*

SPEED UP

By Spencer D. West



A common question I get asked by people, especially after a 5K race, is how they can get faster. Of course, most people who enter races of any distance want to get faster, but there is something about the 5K distance that really makes runners look for ways to cut time and improve their 5K speed. Now is as good a time as any for an article giving some tips to do just that, as we have a few months of cooler temperatures still ahead, and lots of 5K's to test my advice. I don't consider myself an expert in the distance by any means, and the advice that I give cannot be claimed as solely my own, but rather I'll credit many of the great road-racers who I

have been fortunate enough to meet during my 4 ½ year journey in fitness. I've also learned much of what I know now during my 50 plus 5K's during this same period of time, where I've literally cut almost a full 11 minutes off of my 5K time from the summer of 2008 when I ran a 27:26 5K.

Improving speed is not as complicated as it sounds. It's really just a matter of doing the right type of workouts for the specific distance for which you are preparing. In marathon training, most people expect that they will run a lot of miles over a 12-16 week period with several 20 mile runs. Luckily, preparing for a 5K is simpler, in that the preparation time is much shorter and no 20 mile runs are required. Do not think that true preparation for a 5K should be taken lightly or viewed as less important than any other type of race preparation though.

The first step I'd take in a 5K training plan is picking a local 5K (a competitive 5K is always better so that you have many runners around you that will be around your speed and faster) that is 3-5 weeks away (maybe more if you don't have a mileage base or are new to running and/or racing). The second step is to immediately sign up for a local 5K on the coming weekend. The purpose of this first 5K is simply to race it and use it as a gauge for your current speed and fitness level. You can then use an online running calculator (<http://www.mcmillanrunning.com/> as an example) and input your current 5K time to determine the proper training paces to be used in your speed interval work leading up to your goal race.

Now, let's talk about the actual training needed to improve in the 5K. Although everyone has different styles and approaches, certain basics are standard in 5K preparation. Many people consider training for the 5K to consist solely of mile repeats and some track work consisting of 400's and 800's and maybe some 200's thrown in to sharpen speed. In fact, many 5K training plans call for just these types of workouts. Although these workouts surely have their spot in your training plan, you will not be preparing yourself adequately if you stick solely to them. In fact, even when completing those workouts, most people don't perform them correctly, as they either don't take enough rest in between sets, or most often they take too much. The same goes with the speed that you perform the interval work at (which is why the pace calculator is essential in interval work). Remember, the old adage that you don't race in training (or train in races for that matter) couldn't be more accurate.

continued on next page

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