

You're an Athlete--Train Like One!

By Joe Kita--Excerpt from August '97 Walking Magazine

• INTENSITY--TAP ALL YOUR RESOURCES

Meet Your Trainer: Dave McGovern, 31, is a member of the U.S. National Racewalking Team, the fourth fastest American of all time in the 20K (1:24:29) and the coach and inspiration for hundreds of fitness-walkers who have taken his popular "World Class" clinics.

Why You Need Intensity: The key to maximum aerobic fitness lies in training all of the body's physiological systems. "To get better, you have to do different workouts during a typical week that use each of these systems," explains McGovern.

McGovern is a scientist when it comes to training. The road is his laboratory, and his body is an ongoing experiment. He thinks about physiological systems, neuromuscular programming, capillary development, and all sorts of things in order to develop a training program that can help any walker get superfit, the very same program he's using to prepare for the next Olympic Games.

"It covers all the major components--speed, endurance, strength-building, and rest," says McGovern. "If you abide by its basic principles, you'll see some big changes in as little as three to four weeks."

McGovern's Building Blocks

1. Build Endurance with one long walk a week, at an easy, conversational pace to promote capillary growth and oxygen delivery to your working muscles. You should accumulate about a third of your total weekly mileage on this day.

2. Build Speed. McGovern approaches this three ways:

- *Economy days* feature a series of short, fast intervals. Focus on perfect technique to accustom your neuromuscular system to walking fast.
- *Speed days* feature longer fast intervals to strengthen your cardiovascular system and to teach your muscles to maintain energy production even when stressed.
- *Tempo days* consist of an easy warm-up followed by a sustained period of faster walking to get accustomed to maintaining speed.

3. Rest to let your muscles fully rebuild. Some rest days you should take completely off, and on others you can either do short, easy distance or do an alternative activity at an easy pace. McGovern generally alternates rest days with intense workouts.

Take Home Tips

Build two of McGovern's three intense workouts into your weekly schedule. If the recommendations are too tough for your fitness level, do what you can while staying within the training parameters.

- Distance workout: one per week. Go for a long walk that's about one-third of your total weekly mileage.

- Intense workouts: two of the following per week:

Economy. Warm up. Walk 30 seconds at your fastest pace, then 2 minutes easy. Repeat 12 times, then cool down and stretch.

Speed. After warming up, walk for 8 minutes very fast, then 2 minutes easy. Repeat three times, then cool down and stretch. Here, fast means slightly faster than on a tempo day--think race pace.

Tempo. Walk 10 minutes at an easy pace, followed by 20 to 30 minutes of fast (slightly slower than your fastest) walking, then 10 minutes of easy walking (or 5-10-5 if you're not that fit yet).

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