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STANDARD CHARTERED KL MARATHON

RUNNING CLINICS SUMMARY

CLINIC 4 – TRAINING WELL

What is the ‘Six Gear’ Training Programme?

This programme is all about the idea that you conduct your training at different paces. Think of the paces like the ‘gears’ on a bicycle. You change the gears on your bike according to different circumstances such as riding up hills; this is exactly what you do with the paces in running, except that you adjust your paces according to what you want to achieve from your training.

The ‘Six Gears’ are referred to by their descriptive names as follows:

Gear 1 – Recovery

Gear 2 – Comfortable

Gear 3 – Steady

Gear 4 – Threshold

Gear 5 – Hard Effort

Gear 6 – Sprint

- 1) RECOVERY** – This is very easy running that should feel TOO SLOW. This is the run that you do the day after a hard session or a race. The idea is that as you will start your run in a pre-fatigued state, you are teaching your neuromuscular system to keep on performing at this state which is excellent for marathon running, without further increasing your state of fatigue. The key is to run slower than you would on your easy run. Generally, ‘recovery’ runs should be done at about 60-70% of your maximum heart rate.



- 2) **COMFORTABLE** – ‘Comfortable’ runs are done at your default pace (i.e. the pace that you usually go for a run at). It is the pace at which you can comfortably talk to a running buddy continuously. Long runs are an example of a run that should be done at a ‘comfortable’ pace. These runs should be done at between 60-85% of your maximum heart rate.
- 3) **STEADY** – This is easy to medium pace running. Talking is fine but you need to take your time between sentences to catch your breath. The ‘steady’ pace is the average pace that you would be looking to run a marathon at. The ideal time to do this pace is the last 3-5km of a long run to get your body working harder while fatigued. These runs should be done at about 83-87% of your maximum heart rate.
- 4) **THRESHOLD** – Threshold means ‘lactate threshold’. Understanding why training above lactate threshold for too long can be detrimental to your progress in a run is complicated. Basically, it is important to know where or whereabouts your lactate threshold is, as training at speeds above this point will lead to lactate accumulation. Lactate accumulation causes an increased concentration of hydrogen ions and corresponding acidosis. Acidosis is thought to be a primary factor in muscular fatigue. Tempo runs are continuous ‘Threshold’ sessions but Cruise Intervals are ‘Threshold’ repetitions done with breaks in between each rep. (Therefore, you can do more of them!) These runs should be done at or just below your lactate threshold pace. All ‘Threshold’ runs are regarded as ‘medium’ to ‘hard’ running. You can reply to questions in short responses, but you would rather not talk. They should be done at about 87-92% of your maximum heart rate.
- 5) **HARD EFFORT** – ‘Hard Effort’ runs are meant to improve your VO2 Max or the maximum amount of oxygen that your blood can carry to your muscles when working hard. Increasing VO2 Max is critical to running faster. The repetitions you do in ‘Hard Effort’ sessions will have longer intervals than ‘Threshold’ sessions. All ‘Hard Effort’ times are ‘hard’ running paces. Talking is almost impossible other than a quick yes/no response. These runs should be done at about 90-100% of maximum heart rate. An example of a ‘Hard Effort’ session is 6 times 1K intervals.
- 6) **SPRINT** – ‘Sprint’ runs are meant for improving running efficiency by improving biomechanics (how you run) and your anaerobic metabolism (how you run in the absence of adequate oxygen). ‘Sprint’ reps will have longer intervals in between each rep than ‘Hard Effort’ reps. An example of a ‘Sprint’ session is 12 times 200 metres. Forget about heart rates for ‘Sprint’ runs. It is just flat out!

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Are there training sessions which work on more than one pace?

Yes. Some examples of these are as below:

- 1) **Fartlek** – Fartlek means ‘Speed Play’ and you can play around with the gears as part of this session. The idea of fartlek is that you run slowly for a short period of time (e.g. 1 minute at ‘Comfortable’ pace) and then fast for a short period of time (e.g. 2 minutes at ‘Hard Effort’ pace). You could do this for anywhere between 20 and 40 minutes.
- 2) **Acceleration** – An ‘acceleration’ session is a great one for working on pacing. This can be done as a set of repetitions such as 6 times 1K or a continuous run such as an 8K tempo run. The idea is to run each kilometer faster than the previous one so that your fastest kilometer is the last one. Therefore, you may start off at ‘Comfortable’ pace but will work through a set of paces to finish, hopefully running at ‘Hard Effort’ pace towards the end. The BLEEP TEST is a variation of this type of session.
- 3) **Mixing the paces** – One of my favourite session is to mix the three hardest paces so that after a warm up your session could include some cruise intervals at ‘Threshold’ pace, followed by some intervals at ‘Hard Effort’ pace, finishing with some reps at ‘Sprint’ pace.

What about hills?

Hill training is a great way to strengthen up your legs, and hills should and can be brought into the ‘6 gear’ training program. Some ideas are as below:

- 1) In your long runs which are done at ‘Comfortable’ pace, each incline you push to ‘Steady’ pace.
- 2) Interval Hills – Same as Intervals but done on an incline of about 200-400 metres in length (at ‘Hard Effort’ pace).
- 3) Repetition Hills – Same as Repetitions but done of an incline of about 50-100 metres in length (at ‘Sprint’ pace).

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An example of a training week

Based on a 16-week programme for a runner aiming to run under 3 hours 30 minutes for a Marathon.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Cruise Intervals 8*1K at 'Gear 4'	40 mins (Gear 1)	Long Hill Repeats	Rest	10K (ACC)	Gym Work	20K 'Gear 2' but last 5K at 'Gear 3'