

Making nice with the treadmill

For many of us, the winter becomes an off season, not because we necessarily need one, but because Mother Nature forces us into one. If you are like me, you'd tend to skip a run, rather than be forced to the hamster wheel to grind out another run. However, the treadmill can be tolerated. I won't say enjoyable, but I will give you some tips to use this as a way to gain fitness and confidence over the winter.

Most people despise doing their runs on the treadmill because of the monotony. Well, let's break that up a bit. Here's some simple ideas to not only keep your brain from catching on fire, but actually gain fitness.

- 1) Do a combo of incline and declines on your run. I do this all the time. This is great if you live in a traditionally flat area. Doing this allows you to gain some strength and break up your runs. You don't have to increase your speed, simply raise your grade to 2-4% for a few minutes, then back it down back to 1%, or so. If your treadmill has a decline, even better! Alternate the incline with declines and you can simulate going up and coming down hills. Do a few cycles of this and you'll be surprised at how many minutes of your run you can eat up. I find that when I do this I focus on the short time of the incline and decline, all the while losing track of how much I have left to go. For those of you training for Boston, you may want to consider this!
- 2) Those of you training for Boston: Do some downhills! While hills should be your "friend" during your Boston training, downhills provide those eccentric contractions to your quads that will make them tough enough to withstand the descents. There are many treadmills that provide declines, especially at gyms. If not, prop the back end up of yours in the basement. Put a 2x4 or something that will allow the treadmill to be stable. I read that marathon great Rod DeHaven put his on cement blocks and did 16 mile runs like that! I don't recommend that, but you can build into a few miles of that.
- 3) One thing I do like about treadmill training is that you can dial in the paces. Not only for easy runs, but really for those tempo runs and those Strength/Speed workouts. This is especially good for you speed demons who like to cheat paces down faster than what you should be doing. Set it and forget it! Oh wait, that's something else, but you know what I mean... By nailing those exact, or near exact paces, you can get the exact workout you need to get. It may even help with your natural ability to pace, once you get back outside.
- 4) From a psychological standpoint, doing runs on the treadmill can directly help you with learning how to deal with that monotony. What do many marathon and endurance racers struggle with? Keeping their attention span for long periods of time. Forcing yourself to focus on chunks of time where you are just running the same pace over and over and over and over and... Sorry, lost my focus. The point is, we learn to be more in tune with ourselves when we are forced to listen to ourselves. We learn how to focus on the task at hand, and do it for a long period of time.

- 5) Oops, I know the last two weren't exactly tips, so let's finish up with one last tip. Like the hills, where we are periodically changing things up, we can do the same thing with pace. I will start with a slow run, near the really slow end of my easy pace range. Every couple minutes I will take it up a 1/10th of a percent. So if at 6 mph, I'll go 6.1, then 6.2, and so on. As the pace gets to more moderate, I may make that block 5 minutes. Again, I learn to focus on small blocks of time instead of the time I have left to run.

Hopefully, you can get outside and be safe and have good footing. However, I know that storms come up and sometimes it's just not worth the risk. So, use these tips to get you through. Use them to keep you on track with your winter goals and your long term goals. What's that saying, "Your beach body is made during the winter?"

A couple of cool tech things that are new(er) to the treadmill and indoor running scene. Some are cheap, some are not, but pretty cool.

- 1) iFit technology. This stuff is cool. I know some treadmills are equipped and others can be adapted for it. You also have to pay for a subscription, I think. However, you can map out a run using Google Maps. So, if you are training for the Cow Tipping Marathon in Wisconsin, map out the course you'll be running on. Plug it in and your treadmill reacts to the terrain. Very Cool! Also, some have video, too. In either case, something I look forward too on my next treadmill! ([A Sample Here](#))

- 2) The Pro Form Boston Marathon TM: All I am going to say is you have to [check this out!](#) Also, you will need Big Baller Cash.

- 3) A much more cost effective way is available via a company called [Outside Interactive](#). Check these guys out! No need to purchase most of the hardware. Some very cool software that can help you out!

Ok, no excuses now! I expect PR's from everyone now!