

Hardening the Chassis

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No doubt by now anyone taking part in the Run the Great Whitsunday Trail Events would have, over the last couple of months, put the miles in the bank with a steady training schedule made up of mainly aerobic zoned running. This base training phase is crucial to 'build the engine' that will enable us to cover the 28.7km distance on the day.

In the last month it's now important to work on honing the 'chassis', making the body strong and robust to handle the rigors of the trail. We must work on having muscles toughened for the hills, the body conditioned to handle the rigours of the trail and to prepare for the little bits we didn't think of!

Hills!

Now is the time to add focused hill workouts into your training. For the next couple of weeks add some hills repeats or hilly fartlek sessions into your training. A classic hill repeats session could be 10mins of easy running, followed by 10 strong hill repeats on a hill of 200-400m and conclude the session with 20min of tempo paced running to simulate the race like intensity. A fartlek session may involve choosing a route on road or trail with a mixture of different sized hills and surging 'up and over' from the base and down back down, and running easily between the hills. Although these aren't necessarily tactics you'd employ on race day, it will build strength and grind into you a more efficient hill climbing technique.

Don't neglect to add at least 2-3 sessions before race day which target conditioning the legs for the downhill punishment you will face. This can be done on moderate graded hills, running fast and strongly to the bottom. This also has the dual benefit of assisting in fast leg turnover and acting as a speed session in disguise. Recovery from sessions of this nature may take a day or two, so always program them preceding easy and/or rest days.

Get on the Trails!

The twisty and turny and up and down nature of the RTGWT course will also require recruitment of many more muscles. Tendons and ligaments will be tested. Try to get out on the trails that will best replicate the course conditions. Use the opportunities you have now to run these at a pace and intensity you are likely to employ on race day. It may be the time to run solo if you don't have a training partner of similar ability.

Stairs!

With the course changes necessary to this year's event due to the Cyclone Debbie, the route now takes in the Kingfisher Circuit and it's famous 100 step finish. To best prepare yourself for this less than friendly finish, attempt to add stairs towards the end of your long runs. This could be done simply by repeating a small set of steps for 10min or so or even running up a stairwell in a building

for the same length of time. Climbing stairs requires the use of muscles that running doesn't – mainly the front quads. Another way to build the strength in these is to do some long bike hill reps, as the pushing motion of riding (particularly when out of the saddle) is very similar to that when stair climbing.

Hit the (home) gym!

A few extra strength sessions in the next couple of weeks will add finishing touches, the polish to the chassis if you like. I'm not talking about needing to go to the local gym either, for everything we need we can easily set up at home with just a few bits and pieces.

Working on glute and core strength would be the two focus areas and can be easily done with bodyweight exercises and a few things to add resistance like dumbbells, kettle bells and I've used things from bricks to bags of rice when I've had to!

A classic bodyweight routine would include sets rotating around variations of mountain climbers, lunges, burpees, hip thrusts and mason twists. All these will sculp out a firm core. For glute and hamstring strength, you can't look past squat variations. More advanced runners can add plyometric exercises to increase mobility by adding in jump, skips and hops.

See you all on race day!

