

Fine-Tuning the Engine!

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With the majority of our training now done, you should all be feeling pretty self assured that your aerobic 'engine' is able to take you the 28.7km of the race and that you have a 'chassis' strong enough, supple enough and robustly conditioned to handle the specific demands of the Run the Great Whitsunday Trail course.

In the last couple of weeks before the race it's now a time to decrease the overall volume of your training and add in some shorter and shaper workouts to inject that last bit of spark before race day. This serves a dual purpose – by reducing your overall volume and duration of your longer runs it will give your body some time to freshen up, consolidate the training hours and to let the aerobic adaptations kick in.

By adding some shorter and shaper workouts, it will enable the engine be optimised - to add the last little bit's of improvement to our Lactate Threshold and recovery rates. Our Lactate Threshold is what most of us would refer to as the 'burn point', the phenomena that makes us stop and walk up a hill, but not only does it work on short efforts, the more accurate way of defining it would be as the fatiguing influence that affects us throughout the whole day.

To keep the car analogy going, imagine us all starting at the start line with V8 engines. Off we go, but slowly and gradually throughout the day we begin to lose performance, like we are running on less cylinders – well that's the influence of our Lactate Threshold (LT). The more time we flirt around our LT, the quicker we succumb to the resulting fatigue.

So apart from pacing our race properly on the day, what can we do in the last couple of weeks to give our LT a jolt? Well the good news is that unlike our Aerobic Capacity that can take longer to adapt, our LT responds to training stress very quickly, and a couple of weeks of 2-3 sessions of threshold work will definitely give your injectors a boost!

Last year I had the privilege of taking part in the Airlie Beach parkrun – while I wouldn't recommend this for everyone the day before the event as I did, fitting in a parkrun or two at a hard effort now will do you the world of good. If parkrun isn't possible, then head out at a 5km TT or take part in a 10km race – anything that will get you huffy and puffy!

If you have a track nearby, adding some LT focused sessions now is perfect timing. Generally speaking, fast intervals done at around 10k pace of 3-10min in duration with short recovery periods of 1-2 minutes is the type of session you want. Sessions should be around 40min in total duration with of course a preceding Warm Up and concluding Cool Down.

Fartleks are also a fun way to fine-tune the engine. Just head out the door and

choose landmarks on your route to run 'fast' too. Now that can be any pace you want and as far/close as you feel. Just go with the flow and let your body and legs dictate the training session. It's wise to keep the overall duration short though, around 30-40mins maximum. This will give you the 'push and recover' of the trail

The other session that can be just as great and won't leave your legs as fatigued as running is jumping on the spin bike and rolling out some bike intervals. Focus on cadence of legs rather than strength, so favour fast leg turnover with low resistance rather than heavy resistance. Make the intervals short and sharp and this will provide you with the spark in the legs come race day. You may find that extra gear going down hills and on flats!

Good luck in the last weeks of preparation and see you on race day!

