

# COACHING THE 800-3200 ATHLETE



# INSPIRATIONS & INFLUENCERS

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- Scott Christensen
- **Diane Cummins**
- Jack Daniels
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- **Shannon Flynn**
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- Andrea Grove-McDonough
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- **Casey Jermyn**
- Jay Johnson
- Vin Lananna
- Steve Magness
- Marie Markham
- **LaRyn Martin**
- John O'Leary
- John O'Malley
- Dan Pfaff
- **Tom Raunig**
- Tom Rothenberger
- **Jesse Rumsey**
- Tom Schwartz
- Mike Smith
- Diljeet Taylor
- Shannon Thompson
- **Rich Willy**

# NOTABLE ATHLETES

## ■ **Kylie Hartnett, 2022**

- 800: 2:15.50, 3<sup>rd</sup> All-Time HHS
- 1600: 4:56.99, School Record
- 3200: 10:54.20, School Record

## ■ **Kortney McKay, 2027**

- 800: 2:28.55, 20<sup>th</sup> All-Time HHS
- 1600: 5:19.14, 15<sup>th</sup> All-Time HHS
- 3200: 11:32.13, 4<sup>th</sup> All-Time HHS

## ■ **Kate Lee, 2026**

- 1600: 5:33.77, 21<sup>st</sup> All-Time HHS
- 3200: 11:33.75, 5<sup>th</sup> All-Time HHS

## ■ **Henry Sund, 2025**

- 800: 1:56.72, 8<sup>th</sup> All-Time HHS
- 1600: 4:20.01, 2<sup>nd</sup> All-Time HHS
- 3200: 9:52.83, 7<sup>th</sup> All-Time HHS

## ■ **Elliot Stimpson, 2025**

- 800: 2:00.66, 15<sup>th</sup> All-Time HHS
- 1600: 4:23.35, 5<sup>th</sup> All-Time HHS
- 3200: 9:42.10, 3<sup>rd</sup> All-Time HHS

## ■ **Henry Ballinger, 2023**

- 400: 50.39, 7<sup>th</sup> All-Time HHS
- 800: 1:53.28, School Record
- 1600: 4:19.82, School Record

## ■ **Dylan Hill, 2026**

- 1:55.46, 5<sup>th</sup> All-Time HHS
- 4:27.65, 7<sup>th</sup> All-Time HHS
- 9:59.12, 9<sup>th</sup> All-Time HHS

## ■ **Milo Kauffman, 2027**

- 2:00.52, 14<sup>th</sup> All-Time HHS
- 4:29.06, 9<sup>th</sup> All-Time HHS
- 9:44.17, 4<sup>th</sup> All-Time HHS

# KEY CONCEPTS

- **How do we approach coaching the 800, 1600, and 3200?**
  - We consider this group middle distance at the highest level.
  - Training is primarily focused on the 1600 and 3200.
    - Ensures appropriate amount of time spent on energy systems.
    - Athletes who show better ability in the 800 and 1600 periodically join our 400-800 group.
  - Build aerobic engine to access speed, which is a fundamental component on the track.
  - Endurance **athletes**, not just distance runners.

# KEY CONCEPTS

- **Trust the process – It's cliché, but it is the way.**
  - Actions over outcomes.
- **Moderation and Consistency**
  - King and Queen
- **Nail the basics before tackling complexity**
- **Race duration, not distance, determines the aerobic vs. anaerobic contribution**
  - **800** – Male 60% aerobic, 40% anaerobic; Female 70% aerobic, 30% anaerobic
  - **1600** – Male 80 aerobic, 20% anaerobic; Female 85% aerobic, 15% anaerobic
  - **3200** – Male 85% aerobic, 15% anaerobic; Female 90% aerobic, 10% anaerobic

## CHAMPIONSHIP CLIMATE

*Over 80% of what we are surrounded by on a daily basis is negative. Therefore, it is imperative that the practice environment and atmosphere our athletes enter each day counters that negativity with firmer, fertile positive ground.*

Al Carius

# CHAMPIONSHIP CLIMATE

- **Excellence**

- Doing the best you can, with what you have, where you are.
- Consistency in life leads to consistency in training, which leads to consistency in competition.
- Celebrate every victory, no matter how small.

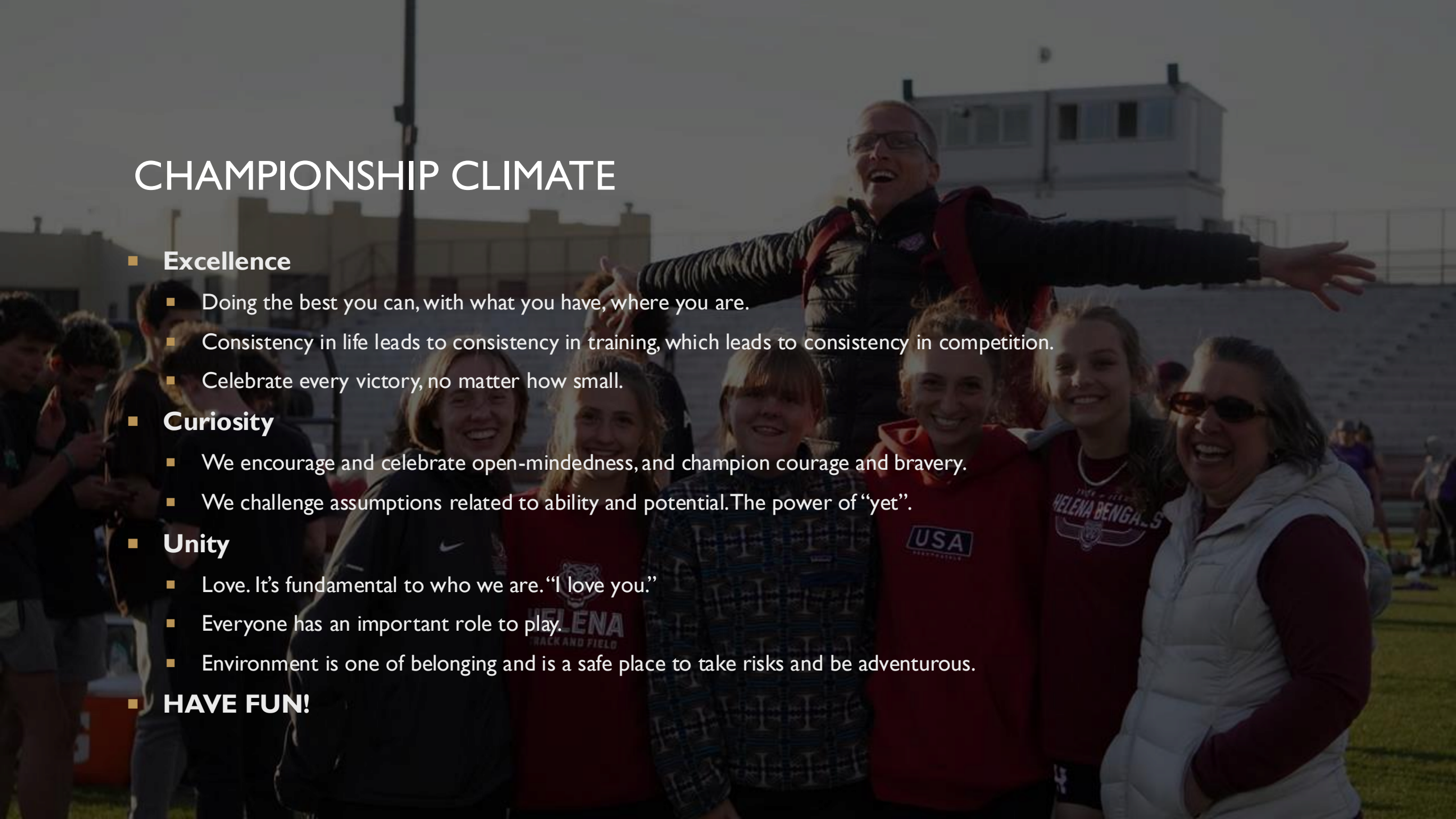
- **Curiosity**

- We encourage and celebrate open-mindedness, and champion courage and bravery.
- We challenge assumptions related to ability and potential. The power of “yet”.

- **Unity**

- Love. It’s fundamental to who we are. “I love you.”
- Everyone has an important role to play.
- Environment is one of belonging and is a safe place to take risks and be adventurous.

- **HAVE FUN!**



# THE MENTAL SIDE OF HIGH PERFORMANCE

- **Shannon Thompson, Mental Performance Counselor**
  - Hypo2Sport
  - NAU Cross Country, Track and Field
  - Team Intensives, Focus Sessions
    - Started in 2023
    - Scheduled again in 2024
- **Key strategies of Shannon's we use**
  - Who do you want to be?
  - Loose race plan
  - "I get to" vs. "I have to"
  - Beathing Meditation and Visualization

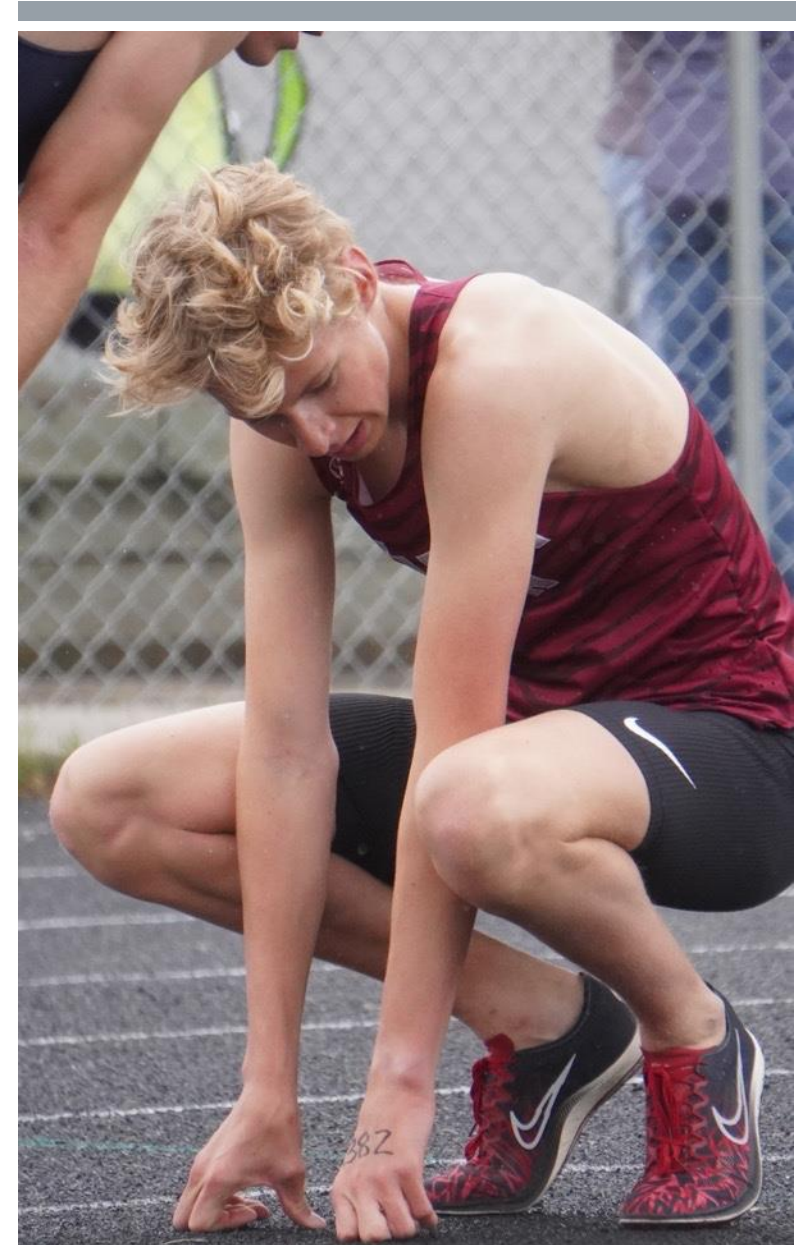
*You have power over your  
mind, not outside events.  
Realize this, and you will  
find strength.*

Marcus Aurelius



# ADVERSITY

- **Embrace the pain. Don't fight the pain (it's not going away).**
  - Use a breathing meditation to calm nerves and visualize prior to race.
  - Sense the pain arriving and visualize a positive response, such as re-focusing on actions.
- **Use training to prime a positive responses to adversity.**
- **Loose race plan – Keep it simple (Shannon Thompson)**
  - What actions can you take?
  - What are you telling yourself?
- **Seek vs. Show**
- **If all else fails.**
  - Mantras
  - Positive self-talk. Who do you want to be?



# COMPETE!

- **Let go of outcomes. Focus on the race you're in.**
  - What is the race you're in? It depends.
  - Let go of worrying about what might happen and instead focus on what you are going to do to make it happen.
  - Focus on the present and what's in your control.
    - Loose race plan.
    - Chunking. Breaking the race into smaller pieces.
  - Compete with the bodies around you.
  - Focus on effort.
  - Respond, don't react. (Practice in practice.)
  - Time and place are not entirely within your control.

The mindset isn't about seeking a result – it's more about the process of getting to that result. It's about the journey and the approach. It's a way of life.

Kobe Bryant



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## TRAINING PACES

### ■ Aerobic

- Easy/Recovery (No shuffling)
- Steady
- Sub T
- Threshold
- 10K
- 5K

### ■ Speed

- 400
- 200
- Acceleration and Max Speed
- Speed Technique

### ■ Specific

- 800
- 1600
- 3200

# PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

- **General to specific**
  - Start with the general components and work toward the middle/specific.
  - Canova/Funnel Approach
  - O'Malley: "Everything is always present."
- **General to Specific Aerobic End** = Technique – Easy – Steady – Sub T – Threshold – CV – 5K – 3200/1600
- **General to Specific Speed End** = Technique – Hill Sprints – Max Speed– 200 – 400 – 800/1600
- **Programming Training**
  - We follow a hard-easy model but do a lot of blending to ensure we can hit required training demands.
  - High school competition schedules do not allow for ideal training plan with a lot of racing.
  - Multi-pace is a major component.
  - Racing often is the best specific stimulus, so work with it and add key training elements.



## PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

- **Activation/Warmup is part of training and is specific to training**
  - Opportunity to add variety to training and build general athleticism.
  - Part of overall training volume.
- **De-Activation/Cooldown is part of training and is consistent**
- **Strength**

# ACTIVATION COMPONENTS

## ■ **Mobility**

- Dynamic movement
- Range of motion
  - Rope Stretching
  - Groundwork (Sneaky core work)
  - Leg Swings
- Band work (Sneaky strength that engages smaller muscle groups)

## ■ **Coordination**

- Biomechanic drills
- Skips
- Plyometrics
- Wickets
- Games

## ■ **Priming the system**

- Done prior to all interval and repetition workouts.
- We don't do this prior to aerobic work at Sub T/ Threshold/CV.
- 1.5 miles w/last 800 at T effort
- 3 x 150 (50 @ 800, 50 @ 400, 50 @ 800) w/50 walk and 200 jog
- 2 x 100 @ 1600 pace w/200 jog
- 2 x 120 @ 800 w/30 run-in, followed by 250 jog

# DE-ACTIVATION COMPONENTS

## ■ **Cooldown Run? Maybe Not.**

- Sometimes, depending on athlete and focus of session
- Never used to add volume
- Descending strides 10 x 100
  - 2 x 1600
  - 2 x 3200
  - 2 x 5K
  - 2 x CV
  - 2 x Threshold
  - Follow with 800 easy

## ■ **Mobility**

- Dynamic movement
- Range of motion
  - Knee pulls, Hamstring extensions, Quad pulls (from rope stretching)
  - Iron Cross, Scorpion, Groiners
  - Yoga sequence: Downward Dog, Cobra, Child Pose, Tick-Tocks
  - After intense sessions, we periodically close with a breathing exercise for 5 minutes.

# STRENGTH

- **When?**
  - On hard days
    - During foundational phase, can move to accommodate athlete schedule
    - Replace with bodyweight if not able
  - Two sessions per week
  - Weight room
    - Twice per week in foundational phase
    - Once per week in competition phase
    - Bodyweight or once in championship phase
- **Bodyweight**
  - Lunge Matrix
    - 2 x 5 each leg
  - Pushups to Plank
    - Work up to 2 x 30 seconds
  - Bridge Hip Thrust
    - 2 x 5 each leg
  - Standard Pushups
    - 20 (can break into sets if needed)
  - Squats (insert jump on odd numbers)
    - 2 x 10
  - Single Leg RDL
    - 1 x 10 each leg
  - Calf Raises
    - 2 x 15 each leg (eccentric)
- **Weight Room**
  - Deadlift
    - 2-3 x 4-6
  - Three-Way Shoulder Press
    - 2 x 8-10
  - Half Squat
    - 2-3 x 4-6
  - Dumbbell Rows
    - 2 x 8-10
  - Bulgarian Lunge
    - 2-3 x 4-6
  - Calf Raises
    - 2 x 15 each leg (eccentric)
  - Waiter Walks & Horse Stance
    - Kettle Bell or Dumbbell arm @ 90



# TRAINING CALENDAR

## ■ **Macrocycle**

- 6 months, unless in a winter sport
  - December, January, February, March, April, May
- Separate plan for winter sport athletes, transitioning with shorter Foundational/General and Competition Phase

## ■ **Mesocycles**

- Foundational/General
  - 3 months: December, January, February
- Competition
  - 2 months: March, April
- Championship
  - 1 month: May

## ■ **Microcycle**

- 7 days in Foundational/General Mesocycles; 14 days in Competition and Championship Mesocycles
- Mixed Pace becomes a consistent theme in Competition and Championship Mesocycles
- Hard to fit everything you need into a single week once the racing begins
- Racing covers some of the training requirements; Plan that way to take advantage of a busy season.

## THE JOURNEY

- Training calendar is a map.
- Coaches are the GPS.
- Route may change.
- Detours are often common on an exciting and safe journey.
- Goal of GPS is to help athletes arrive at their destination.
- Map and GPS are not perfect.



# FOUNDATIONAL/GENERAL PHASE

- **Physical Adaptation to Running**
  - Especially important for athletes who didn't participate in cross country.
- **General to Specific**
  - 1. Technique/Easy/Steady/Fartlek and Technique/Hill Sprints (2-months)
  - 2. Sub T/Threshold/CV/Variations and Hill Sprints/Max Speed/200 (1-months)
  - 3. Threshold/CV/5K/Variations and Long Hill Sprints/400/800 (1-month focus)
- **Competition Overlap**
  - Indoor races add some fun to doldrums of long buildup.
  - Helps athletes see where they're at without specific training.
  - Reinforces belief in importance of general adaptations.





## COMPETITION PHASE

### ■ Foundational Overlap

- Indoor races
- Begin competition phase with time trials which adds to overlap.
- Allows athletes to see what foundational phase provided them.
- Allows winter sport athletes opportunity to build appropriately.

### ■ General to Specific

- 1. Threshold/CV/5K/Variations and Long Hill Sprints/400/800 (1-month focus; overlap with foundational/general)
- 2. CV/5K/3200/1600 and 400/800 (1-month focus)

# CHAMPIONSHIP PHASE

- **Competition Overlap**

- Art of Coaching

- Close observation will help you determine what athletes need.
    - Race evaluation: Where are they strong, where are they breaking down?
    - Optimal time for final adjustments to training before its too late.
    - Often time to determine whether there should be a focus on one event, two, or more (rare).
    - Not always perfect, so be patient with athletes and kind to yourself.

- **General to Specific**

- 1. CV/5K/3200/1600 and 400/800 (2-week focus)
  - 2. 3200/1600/800 and Competition (2-week focus)



# COLLECTIVE SUCCESS IN 2024

## ■ **BOYS**

### ■ **800**

- 7 state qualifiers (2:01)
- 7 letter winners (2:04)

### ■ **1600**

- 5 state qualifiers (4:34)
- 7 letter winners (4:50)

### ■ **3200**

- 3 state qualifiers (10:00)
- 5 letter winners (10:20)

## ■ **GIRLS**

### ■ **800**

- 1 state qualifier (2:20)
- 10 letter winners (2:35)

### ■ **1600**

- 1 state qualifier (5:23)
- 11 letter winners (5:50)

### ■ **3200**

- 3 state qualifiers (11:50)
- 5 letter winners (12:40)

# AEROBIC DEVELOPMENT – FOUNDATIONAL

- **Technique**
  - Wickets with a control/cone
  - Wickets spaced evenly
  - Control forces athletes to clean up mechanics
- **Minutes or Miles**
  - We do both but tend to do miles more often.
  - If you know your athletes well, miles work great.
- **Easy/Recovery Runs**
  - Target pace is about 3:00-3:30 slower than 1600 time.
  - Vary in distance and time, and sometimes leave it mostly up to the athletes, since they know their bodies best.
  - If form is breaking down, it's time to cut it short.
- **Steady Runs**
  - Target pace is about 2:00-2:30 slower than 1600 time.
  - We try to do long runs and medium long runs on the slower end. Can start by doing the second half of a long run at this pace.
- **Progression Runs**
  - Great way to safely introduce faster running and work toward more difficult aerobic sessions to come.
  - Can take many forms.
- **Unstructured Fartlek**
  - Fun way to add a challenge to LR or MLR.
  - Great way to transition into aerobic repeats at Sub T, threshold, and CV paces later.

# AEROBIC SUPPORT – FOUNDATIONAL

## ■ Sub T

- Roughly 1:20-1:30 slower than 1600
- Marathon race pace
- Sustained up to 3 miles
- Session volume up to 6 miles
- As part of block in a longer
- 2-3 x 3200 is a good option for experienced athletes
- Not too hard on the body

## ■ Threshold

- Roughly 0:55-1:05 slower than 1600
- Half marathon race pace
- Session Volume up to 5 miles
- Repeats, rest varies, can be jogging
  - 3200 – 2:00-2:30 rest
  - 2K – 1:30-2:00 rest
  - 1600 – 1:00-1:30 rest
  - 1200 – 1:00-1:15 rest
  - 1000 – 0:45-1:00 rest
  - 800 – 0:30-0:45 rest
  - 400 – 0:15-0:30 rest

## ■ Critical Velocity

- Roughly 0:40-0:45 slower than 1600
- 10K Race Pace
- Session volume up to 3 miles.
- Repeats, rest varies, can be jogging
  - 1200 – 1:30-2:00
  - 1200 – 1:00-1:30 rest
  - 1000 – 1:00-1:15
  - 800 – 1:00-1:15
  - 400 – 0:30-0:45



# THRESHOLD AND CV

- These two training paces occupy a large part of our calendar.
- How we use these paces varies dramatically.
- Great opportunity to mix with other paces.
  - **1/2/2/2 Repeats - Continuous**
    - 1K at T or CV, 200 jog or easy, 200 at 1600 pace, 200 jog or easy
  - **CV + 1600 pace**
    - 3-5 x 1K at CV, followed by 4-6 x 200 at 1600 pace
  - **Go Tempo Go – Practice shifting**
    - 200 at 5K pace, 1200 at T, 200 at 3K pace
  - **Maintenance**
    - Part of training activation or often placed at the beginning or end of a work for additional training effect.

# AEROBIC SUPPORT – FOUNDATIONAL/COMPETITIVE

- **400/400 In-and-Outs**
  - On 400 at 5K
  - Off 400 at jog
    - Don't speed up the rep, speed the recovery as you progress.
    - Progress to easy, then steady as fitness develops.
  - 2400-4800 volume
- **300/100 In-and Outs**
  - On 300 at 5K pace
  - Off portion at jog
    - Don't speed up the rep, speed the recovery.
    - Progress to easy, then steady as fitness develops.
  - 2400-4800 volume
- **150 with walk-in 50**
  - 150 at 3200 pace
  - 50 walk rest
  - 10-20 sets
  - 1200-3200 volume
- **200/200 In-and-Outs**
  - On 200 at 1600-3200 pace
  - Off 200 at jog
    - Don't speed up the rep, speed the recovery.
    - Progress to easy, then steady as fitness develops.
  - 1200-3200 volume
  - Can break reps into sets to make progression more manageable.

# TECHNIQUE, HILLS, MAX SPEED – FOUNDATIONAL/COMPETITIVE

## ■ **Wicket Drill**

- Started using this in 2016.
- Fundamental piece of our program for 9 seasons.
- Sprint version and Distance version.
- Can see mechanics shift and improve with repetition.
- Be patient and avoid stepping in.
- Cues/Reminders
  - Not a high-knee drill (athletes tend to try that)
  - Put feet down
  - Arm swing (easy to forget about your arms)
  - Chin up, eyes up

## ■ **Hill Sprints**

- Patient progression
- 6 seconds, 8 seconds, 10 seconds, 12 seconds, 15 seconds.
- Hills force appropriate mechanics.
- Reinforce what it feels like to sprint.

## ■ **Max Velocity**

- We do not focus on acceleration, since it's not a major component of the 800-3200.
- 200-600 meters of volume (progress)
- **General rule:** 1 minute of rest for 10 meters of sprinting
- Fly 30s, 40s

*Cue and train “Loose and fast.” Distance runners will tense up when trying to sprint, because it's not natural, but loose is fast.*

# SPEED MAINTENANCE – COMPETITIVE

- **Introduce longer sprints with shorter rest**
- **Longer hill sprints with a jog back.**
- **Activation for workout sessions** takes care of speed maintenance during the competitive phase.
  - 3 x 150 (50 @ 800, 50 @ 400, 50 @ 800) w/50 walk and 200 jog
  - 2 x 100 @ 1600 pace w/200 jog
  - 2 x 120 @ 800 w/30 run-in, followed by 250 jog
- **Wickets:** We also touch on speed with wickets every other week during the competitive phase.

## SPECIFIC 800

- **800 pace repeats**
  - 800-1600 volume
  - Rest ~ 2-3 x the rep duration
  - 2 x (4 x 120) w/45 seconds between reps, 4 minutes between sets
  - 2 x (5 x 200) w/90 seconds between reps, 5 minutes between sets
  - 500 w/4 minutes rest, 400 w/3 minutes rest, 300 w/2 minutes rest, 200 w/1 minute rest, 100



## SPECIFIC 1600

- **1600 pace repeats**
  - 1600-3200 volume
  - 1:30-2:00 walk or jog rest
  - 8 x 200 (In-and-Out are a great transition)
  - 3 x (3 x 300), 2 x (5 x 300), or 10 x 300
  - 6 x 400, 2 x (4 x 400)
  - 5 x 300/1 x 600/2 x 300



## SPECIFIC 3200

- **3200 pace repeats**
  - 2400-5K volume
  - 1:1 recovery between reps
  - 3-person 16 x 200 relay
  - 2-person 12 x 300 relay
  - 2-person 10 x 400 relay
  - 3 x (400/800), 4 x 800
  - 400, 800, 1200, 800, 400
  - 1200, 800, 800, 400, 400, 400





## MIXING PACES – GET CREATIVE

- **We rarely do workouts focused on a single pace.**
- **Especially, important in Competitive and Championship phases.**
  - Most often, not enough time to hit every type of workout needed each week.
- **Excellent way to transition from one phase to another.**
  - Ex: Foundational to Competitive, Competitive to Championship.
- **This is an opportunity to get creative as a coach.**
  - Challenging but fun.
  - Kids love variation and their bodies and minds respond well to it.



# MIXING PACES – BORROW CONCEPTS AND GET CREATIVE

## ■ **ABCs (Johnson, One Variation)**

- A - 2 x 1200 @ CV w/200 jog
- B - 3 x 600 @ 3200 w/400 jog
- C - 3 x 300 @ 1600 w/200 jog

## ■ **800 Breakdown**

- 800 at 3200, 400 jog, 600 at 1600, 400 jog, 400 at 1600-800, 400 jog, 300 at 800, 400 jog, 4 x 200 at 400/FAST, 200 walk between reps, 100 at AYG (All you got)

## ■ **Broken Ks (Lananna)**

- **2-3 sets:** 1K at 5K, 400 jog, 500 at 3K, 300 jog, 300 at 1600, 200 jog, 200 at 800
- Can adjust by removing 1K on third set for athletes able to do more.

## ■ **T Sandwich**

- 1 x Threshold Mile
- 6 x 400 at 3K down to 1600 pace w/1:30 rest
- 2 x 200 @ 800 w/1:00 rest
- 1 x Threshold Mile

## ■ **Slow to Fast**

- 1 x Threshold Mile
- 4 x 1K (3K, 5K, 3K, 5K), 2-4 minutes recovery
- 1 x 300 - sub mile goal pace, 2-3 minutes recovery
- 1 x 150 - sub 800 goal pace, 2-3 minutes recovery

# EVENT SELECTION

## ■ Primary events

- 800
  - Double sparingly with 1600.
  - Double often early in the season with 4x400.
- 1600
  - Double sparingly with 800 or 4x400.
  - Only double with the 3200 if the schedule allows (rare).
- 3200
  - Most often run on its own without a double.

## ■ Speed Support

- 400
  - Athletes who specialize in the 800 and compete up can benefit from running a couple 400s early in the season to build speed endurance.
- 4x400
  - Early in the season, running the 4x400 as a double for distance runners can have a nice training effect and help with speed maintenance and speed endurance.

You can be  
proud of yourself  
and want more  
from yourself  
at the same time.

Alexi Pappas

