

DEEP WATER RUNNING

by Doug Stern

Deep water running is the best cross training venue for runners. It will allow you to train if you are injured and speed up the recovery process. It will enhance your speed if you are healthy and provide a whole body workout which will increase your joint range of motion strengthen postural muscles.

The water has certain properties, which lend itself to non-weight bearing resistance training. The most obvious is its buoyant affect. We float at or near the surface of the water. You can run in the water without any pounding on your feet or joints. Secondly, the water is viscous or thicker than air. As you move your arms and legs through the water you encounter a tremendous resistance. This resistance can be used to repair and strengthen muscles and joints. The faster you move your arms and legs the greater the resistance you will encounter and therefore the harder the workout and the greater the strength gain. Water exerts greater pressure on our bodies than air does. Plus running in the water allows us to do more exercise bouts with less recovery time than a similar workout done on land. The water pressure coupled with the lack of gravity acting on you and water's cooling affect allows for faster recovery from strenuous exercise. Blood flows back to the heart faster and the body is cooled quicker in the water than on land.

EQUIPMENT: Any device that keeps your body afloat and in an upright position will work. My favorite is a learn-to-swim belt with three adjustable floats. It is small enough to throw in my bag and yet provides just enough floatation to keep my head above water.

HOW TO:

Belt - Put your belt on with one float in the front and two in the back. Make sure your belt is snug.

Legs - Start with very straight legs. Point your toes as if you are a ballet dancer and sweep your legs back and forth. Use your upper thigh to create the movement. Feel the water on the tops of your toes and your leg moves forward and on the bottom of your feet as they move backward. Make no attempt to bend or lift your knees.

Arms - With your arms gently by your sides, palms of hands facing backward, elbows slightly bent, leading with your elbows, press your arms back in coordination with your legs (left leg-right arm and vice versa). Let your thumb graze your thigh as it swings in each direction. Make sure your arms move directly forward and back.

Head and eyes - Feel as if a string is supporting your head above your shoulders. **LOOK STRAIGHT AHEAD** with your chin angled toward your neck, mouth open and jaw relaxed.

Shoulders - Press your shoulders back and down slightly. They should be loose and relaxed.

Chest - Press forward and up (it allows for easier breathing and an erect body position)

Hips - keep them under your shoulders.

ALTERNATE FORMS OF RUNNING

Power walking - Keep arms and legs straight and picture yourself cross-country skiing. Your arms touch the surface on the forward and back swing. Legs split with each stride. It is a great general body conditioner and strengthener.

Hurdles - Picture yourself running over hurdles alternating the lead leg. Reach forward with each arm as if you were trying to touch your lead foot. This exercise is great for increasing range of motion at the hip area and hamstrings.

Uphill running - Exaggerate the back swing of the elbows as you use your upper body to add power in the run. Lift your knees slightly more than in a regular run. Visualization works great on hill repeats.

Downhill running - Speed, speed, speed. Drop your arms, narrow your stride, lean forward slightly and increase your cadence. Downhill running is like vertical kicking in swimming.

TYPICAL WORKOUTS

Our workouts last about 40-45 minutes. We devote the first five minutes to warm up. It's a time for bitching and moaning and getting ready for the hard stuff.

Easy running is followed by 30 minutes of hard running done in a variety of ways.

Intervals - We use a three to one ratio of hard runs to easy runs. Example - 3 minutes fast - one minute recovery or 1 1/2 minutes fast 30 seconds recovery. You can vary the combinations.

Fartlek (speed play) - Imagine a running course and duplicate it. We use Central Park. It has up and down hills, other runners to race with, dogs to avoid, muggers to be wary of (run with your arms in the air as if you were being held up) and anything else you can create. It is non-stop and you can vary the pace at will. It is one of our toughest workouts. Incorporate all the different running forms in one workout.

Progressive speed - One of our goals is to become a faster runner. Being aware of cadence or stride frequency helps achieve those ends. As you run check your cadence. This number is the amount of times one leg moves back and forth. We normally count for a fifteen second period. Run for three minutes. After each minute increase your cadence by one or two strides. Rest for one minute and repeat the sequence each time running a little faster. As your running speed increases you will need to change your hand position from pressing palms back to slicing your hand through the water as Carl Lewis does in a 100 meter sprint.

Add variety to your workouts. We run to hard driving music and each week we change the workout. Invite your friends to run with you. It's much more fun. Let each one make up a new workout.

Key points to remember:

1. Remain conscious - check cadence often and do periodic body checks.
2. Make sure your arms move forward and back, no crossing past midline.
3. Feel the water on your shins as you legs move forward and on your soles as they move backward. Avoid pumping your knees up and down.
4. Use your imagination to create a challenging workout.
5. You get out of a workout what you put into it. Drive your body! The water will take care of everything else.

Sample Workout

Warm up for 10 minutes

2 X (flat 20- down 25 - rec. 15, flat 20 - uphill 25 - rec. 15, power walk 20-flat 25 - rec 15)

1 min easy run

6 X (uphill run for 60 sec with 20 sec. R.I. acfdecelerate every 20 seconds within each minute)

3 min. moderate run on flats

9 X (downhill 30 sec + 10 sec. R.I.

3 min. moderate run on flats

sprint 6 X 20 sec. on flats

easy recovery