

Chapter 12

1,500 Meters to 2 Miles

Never miss a chance to tell teammates they are doing well.

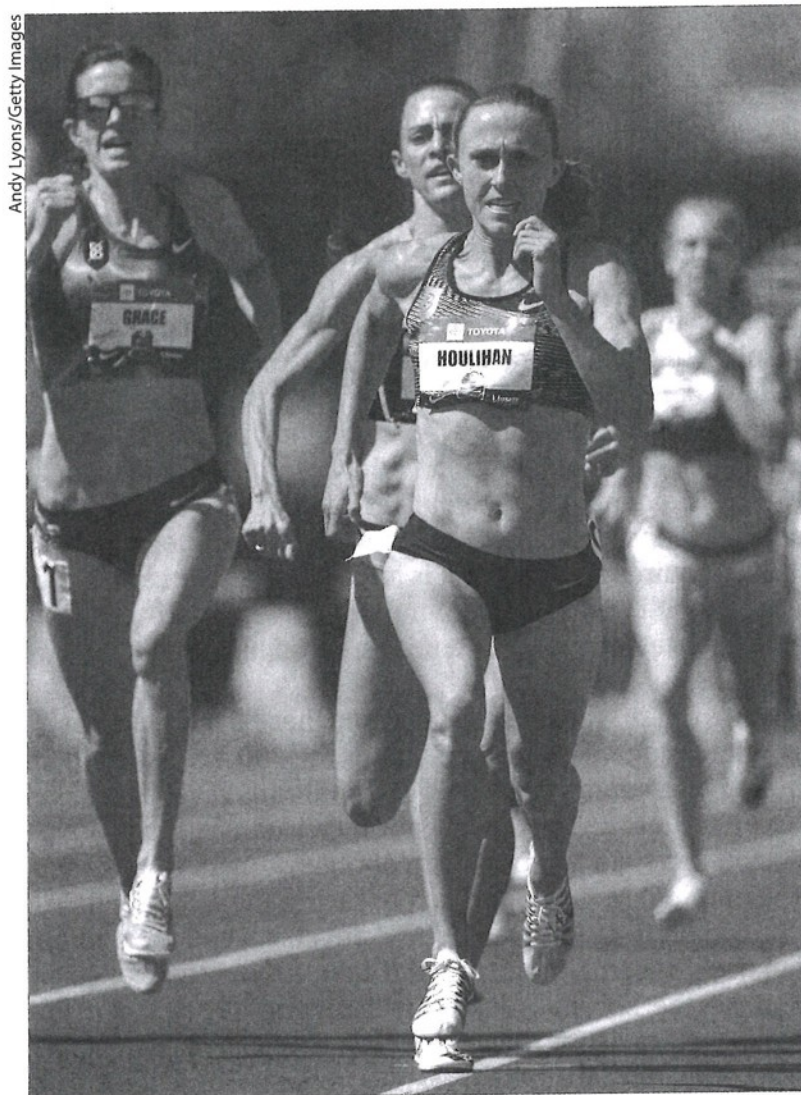
As is true for many 800 runners who also race seriously over the 1,500-meter and mile distances, so do many 1,500 and mile runners race seriously over the 3K and 2-mile distances, so I propose a four-phase training plan that covers races from 1,500 meters to 2 miles. Some 1,500 runners are equally dedicated to racing the 800 (and the 1,000-meter distance during indoor seasons), and the training I outline in this chapter will prepare runners for a variety of middle-distance events.

The 1,500 is a demanding aerobic event that also relies a great deal on speed and anaerobic energy systems, and the intensity of a hard-raced 1,500 requires an effort that is about 10 to 12 percent higher than an athlete's $\dot{V}O_2\text{max}$. The 3,000-meter and 2-mile distances are run right at an athlete's $\dot{V}O_2\text{max}$, about the speed used during demanding I training sessions.

In plotting out a season of training for these events, I start phase I training pretty much the same as I do for the 800, with a good amount of E running plus some strides (ST) or uphill runs several times a week.

In races that last about 4 to 12 minutes, runners tend to get going too fast, too soon, so I strongly encourage runners to almost overdo going out cautiously. One approach to racing the 1,500 or mile, when trying for a good time (and tactics and adverse weather conditions are not of major concern), is to run the first 400 meters conservatively and to make the second 400 about 2 seconds faster than the first. This works well because it is common for younger runners to go out several seconds too fast, which results in the second 400 being quite a bit slower than the first.

If you watch a lot of mile races, you may have noticed that the split time for the third 400 is often equal to the split for the second 400, and so going out fast for the first minute, followed by a major slowdown after the first minute usually leads to a slow third 400 and a missed opportunity for a good time. However, a more cautious first 400 and a focused effort for a faster second 400 often leads to a good third 400, and then it is just a matter of hanging on for that final 400. As is true for racing over any distance, it is beneficial to try a variety of approaches to see what works best for you.



Shelby Houlihan established a new U.S. women's record in the 1,500-meter event through solid training and a competitive fire, which she described as wanting to "get out there and rip people apart."

I have known many 1,500-meter and mile runners over the years, and I have made a point of asking how many of them like racing events that are shorter and how many prefer racing events that are longer than the distance of their best event. It turns out they like doing both shorter and longer races, with a little more dedication to racing shorter. There is little doubt that racing the mile makes the pace of a 2-mile race seem relatively comfortable, and racing a 2 mile or 3K makes a 1,500 or mile seem like a fairly short event.

PHASE I

Phase I in any of the programs I recommend is the time to work on easy mileage, to add strides (ST) to easy days of running, and to be involved in supplemental training (e.g., light resistance training or circuit training). Try to avoid running immediately after supplemental exercises; it is better to run either before this other work or several hours afterward.

Because phase I is primarily **E** runs and nontimed running, it is easy for just about everyone to do this phase of training on their own, when it best fits into the daily schedule. In a school team situation, usually all runners will be training at the same time. In this case it is important to divide the team into groups of equal fitness and ability so the not-so-fit runners aren't trying to keep up with others who are in much better shape and set a pace that is too demanding.

PHASE II

I start injecting **Q** (quality) sessions into the program in this phase of training, as is typical in all the training programs I put together. These **Q** sessions include a weekly **L** run and a couple of **R** workouts each week. Occasionally, runners can start with phase II of training if they have just come off of a season and are in good aerobic shape. For example, for runners who have just completed a fall cross country season of training and racing, that season has eliminated the need for a phase I, and this is a good time to go back to concentrating on **R** workouts, as is normal for my phase II training programs. End-of-season cross country runners are in top aerobic shape, and time spent working on speed and economy will set them up well for an indoor track season, which normally involves racing over shorter distances.

In addition, **R** training is usually less stressful on the body than **I** training. Middle- and long-distance runners often look forward to spending time with repetition training, seeing it as a break from the demands of intervals and important races over distances of 5 to 12 kilometers.

PHASE III

I believe phase III is the most demanding phase of the entire season. Along with the more stressful **I** workouts, I like to schedule weekly **T** sessions, which are good at improving endurance. It could be said that this period of training will determine how much better a runner will get in the season.

Being willing and able to handle the **I** sessions without trying to overdo anything is the key to improvement during this tough phase of training. It's always good to remember that the goal of **I** workouts is to achieve the maximum benefit from the least amount of work, and this definitely means relying on the training speeds your recent races have provided through the VDOT tables.

PHASE IV

During a competitive track season, it is sometimes hard to not overdo the racing. For runners who are specialists over 1,500, mile, 3K, and 2-mile distances, the key is to vary the race distances and to be willing to adjust the training schedule during weeks when you have several races. Try to think of 400-, 800-, and 1,000-meter (and even 1,500 and mile) races as stressing your anaerobic and speed capabilities more than 3K and 2-mile races do. So, take advantage of racing a variety of distances, which is a definite opportunity during track season (unlike the cross country season, when every race is about the same in duration).

Always be willing to vary scheduled workouts, especially during outdoor seasons, when weather conditions can have a major effect on what training will work best, both mentally and physiologically. Also, be willing to eliminate a scheduled training session if having two Q days in the same week will bring you into an important Friday or Saturday race inadequately recovered.

TRAINING ON 30 MILES (48 KM) PER WEEK

Phase I. Even though each week includes three Q sessions in phase I, none of the Q sessions are at all demanding, and I list them as Q sessions only because there is more than just an **E** run involved in each. One Q session is a relatively long **L**- or **Mod**-pace run, and the other two Q sessions include strides (ST), which are 15- to 20-second light, quick runs that can be done on the flat or up a gradual hill if available, but they are not meant to be all-out sprints in nature. If doing strides