

How to get started with a Training Diary for Athletes

A Training Diary should be an essential training tool in an athlete's kit bag. Training diaries have been used by athletes, in fact by high performers in all walks of life for a very long time. Training diaries are often quoted as being the primary motivator for athletes, yet a lot of athletes don't have one. Maybe it can be quite overwhelming to a novice athlete, when a coach says "keep a diary, so hopefully here is some practical advice for athletes on how to use a simple diary.

Basics of recording your training



Before we begin, we need to consider the 4 basic elements that you need to consider when training:

- Nutrition (*What you eat*)
- Duration (*How much training you do*)
- Intensity (*How hard you train*)
- Recuperation (*How you recover from training*)

A training diary needs to capture these four elements as a basic starting point. You need to record everything you eat, every bit of training you do and also how you recover. These are some of the basics you need to record: - how many weekly sessions you do & the duration, how many drills/repetitions you do at each session, the distance that you run & how fast you run, how many jumps/throws you do etc. You need to write down every piece of food you eat. Importantly you need to record how much rest you get, including how many hours sleep and how you feel during the day. Taking your resting pulse every morning before you get out of bed is also a useful habit to get into. Any significant upward changes in your pulse rate are usually linked to tiredness/fatigue or oncoming illness.

Recording these basic elements will give you a view of what yesterday or last week looked and felt like. You may be surprised at how your memory and what you write differ. Look

particularly for the relationships between your recuperation and the previous day or days training. If you feel tired today, what did you eat yesterday, what training did you do?

Use this information to adjust your training to minimise the training sessions you go to that leave you feeling tired or sore. Use it to find gaps in your schedule that are dragging you down. Use it to find highpoints and work out why it was a good day/session. Just recording the basics above will give you a good start, it may be enough for your first diary.

Not Just for training!

A diary is not just for training during the week, take it to competitions with you and write down what happened in your race/competition. Write down what you see and feel, how you perform and anything you see others doing that is of interest to you.

REVIEW, REVIEW, REVIEW!

Capturing this information is the important start of a process that will help you understand and improve your training. The Yin to this Yang is reviewing your diary. It is recommended that you review your diary once a week with your coach(es). You need to sit down and look at your training (and competitions) and see what comes to light as you read through what you have done. If you maintain a blog, this review can form the basis of a weekly blog post on your website. Alternatively it might form a report you send to the national coach, sponsors or mum and dad. The process of summarising your diary will allow you to understand yourself better and if you write this summary with a coach, the conversations between the two of you will help shed light on training issues bubbling under the surface. You should also review everything and the summaries at the end of every training macro-cycle also. Compare the reality (diary) to the goals (the training plan), how did they compare? What went well, what went poorly? This will help you modify your next macro-cycle to be even better than the last one.

Planning too.

Don't forget your diary is a brilliant place to write down your planned training for the week. Put down the type, durations, intensities and goals of each session in advance. Re-read it before each training session and it will help you focus on what you should be doing.

Summary

There you have it, a basic introduction to the Whys and Hows of starting your training diary. You could buy a cheap B5 hard cover diary from a stationary store, the sort with 1 or 2 pages per day. There are specific training athletic/sports training diaries you can buy, but maybe you should just start with a simple standard diary first, they are cheap and easy.

Throw that diary and (more than one) pen in your kit bag and take the diary with you everywhere. Write down as much as you can as close to when it happens as possible, while it's still fresh in your mind. Scribbling stuff down during water breaks can be good.

Hopefully, this will help you get started with a training diary.