

READINGTON RUNS – Winter Running

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Winter can be a time of the year for runners to take some time off from intense training and to recover



from Fall road races or the cross-country season. It's a time to re-charge the batteries and the holidays are a convenient excuse to indulge in food and drink that you might otherwise avoid while in training. But it's a mistake to become totally idle during the cold winter months, and doing so can make the journey back to race fitness extremely difficult. That applies to middle and high-schoolers planning to run Spring track, or road warriors and trail runners. The return to racing will be a lot easier and productive if you maintain some sort of ongoing training throughout the winter, even if many of the runs are at a relaxed, conversational pace. It's a lot harder to regain

fitness than it is to lose it in the first place.

You can do anything you want in the winter that you can in the summer – you just have to dress differently. Winter running can be bearable if you use the appropriate clothing. No matter how cold it is, once you start running, you are going to perspire, so the key is to dress in breathable fabrics that wick away sweat. Shirts and shorts should ideally be made of “tech” materials such as Coolmax or ClimaCool. Recommended outer layers can include fleece and/or Goretex. Just dressing in multiple thin layers will often do the trick. In extreme cold and/or wind, it will be necessary to wear something on your legs. The days of cotton sweatpants are long gone. There are now all kinds of stylish running tights – some of them loose and some form-fitting – that can be obtained at running specialty stores. The most important thing to remember for winter running is to protect the extremities. A large portion of body heat is lost through the head, so a hat should be considered. In very cold temperatures, a wool hat will work best. And don't forget the hands. Sometimes thin cotton gloves will be all you will need. Below freezing, you may need something more substantial. Don't forget that mittens are much warmer than gloves.

Of course, there are alternatives to running on the roads during the December to February timeframe. Particularly when there is snow and ice, a treadmill can be a viable option. Some of the tricks to avoid boredom are to listen to music or watch television or videos while doing your workout. Watching an inspiring video on road racing can make the workout go relatively quickly. Another important factor is to regularly vary the speed and or elevation. Your leg muscles will thank you for it.

Another indoor option to help you maintain your fitness is to do some cross-training. In addition to treadmills, most gyms have stationary bikes, Stepmasters, elliptical machines, and weights. Don't forget swimming as an excellent cross-training regimen. You may end up enjoying the swim workouts so much that you start thinking of combining swimming with biking, and then with running. Before you know it; you're a Triathlete!

Winter is also a good time to catch up on reading. In addition to running novels, there are some excellent training books designed to help you move to the next level in your running and racing performances. The start of the year is a good time to initiate the year's racing plans, and a good training program can make the difference between just completing a race versus running a Personal Best. Some of the best “how-to” books include:

Hal Higdon's How to Train: The Best Programs, Workouts, and Schedules....

The Competitive Runner's Handbook – Bob Glover

Daniels' Running Formula – Jack Daniels

Advanced Marathonng – Pete Pfitzinger and Scott Douglas

Speaking of races, we are lucky in this part of the country to have races organized virtually every weekend in NJ, NY, or PA. Check out Compuscore.com, RaceForum.com, NYRR.org, or Running in the USA.com. Here's some of the events upcoming in the next two months:

Feb. 3	NYRR Gridiron Classic 4 Mile
Feb 10	NYRR Bronx Half-Marathon
Feb 23	NYRR Al Gordon Snowflake 4 Mile
Mar 2	E Murray Todd Half-Marathon
Mar 15	Morristown St Patty's Day 5K
Mar 16	Milburn Spring Run 10K
Mar 30	Central Bucks Family YMCA 5K
Mar 30	St Paddy's Freehold 10 Mile & 5K
Mar 30	Ocean Drive Marathon

For more info on the Hill Runners of Hunterdon, visit www.HRHNJ.org, or contact Bruce Marshall at BGMarshall@earthlink.net.