

What's Important

Here is the list of all the training factors our runners had in common. These are the training points and effort levels that, once our individual runners conformed to, they successfully performed at a level necessary to win the State 1600m title.

Again, this “what’s important” list is based solely on the interviews with the runners and not on what anyone, including coaches and the author, may think is important to training for and winning the state 1600m.

Tapering

With the exception of our two winners in the 1960's, all of our runners tapered. Tapering for the most part consisted of reducing intervals and mileage for one or two weeks before the state meet. Typically, during the taper period, the speed of the intervals was increased. Tapering almost universally consisted of running short fast intervals and reducing mileage by 1/2 the volume.

Some of the classic questions with tapering are: when do we start tapering, how much do I cut back on volume of miles, and what type of speed work or sharpening intervals during the tapering period. Let us first look at what the majority of our runners did in response to these questions. In regards to when they started tapering, 50% of our runners tapered for one week before the state meet, another 33% tapered two weeks before state and the last 15% tapered three weeks before state. Concerning volume of miles run during a week, 50% reduced their volume by one third, running approximately 35 miles a week during tapering. 25% reduced their volume by a half, another 25% reduced their volume by a quarter. As to interval or sharpening, the majority ran 200m to 400m intervals. Two runners ran no sharpening intervals, and one runner ran 800m repeats. Summarizing what we should do for tapering by based on what the majority of our runners did, we should taper only one week before state and run two sharpening workouts consisting of 200 to 400m repeats at a faster speed and run only a half-dozen of these. Our mileage would be reduced by a third, running approximately 30 to 35 miles for the tapering week.

But let's look at tapering from another angle. The purpose of tapering is to reduce effort levels of training and produce a faster race time. So let us try to draw a conclusion about tapering by reviewing just the runners that had their fastest time at the state meet. The runners that tapered and produced their fastest time at the state meet used the following tapering methods: they reduced volume of mileage by 50%, tapered only one week before state and ran very few, if any, intervals.