

Performance Page: Dr. Dave's Do-Do Rule

Adequate recovery may be the missing element in your training

By Greg McMillan, M.S.

As featured in the May 2008 issue of Running Times Magazine

Dr. David Martin is one of my favorite people in our sport (see the October 2007 issue of Running Times for a profile on Dr. Martin). While he could just sit in his lab and do his own thing, that's not his style. Instead, he takes an active role in helping athletes succeed. He's credited with helping U.S. marathoners optimally prepare for the unusually hot and humid conditions at the Athens Olympics, and the results were a silver and bronze medal.

One of the things I like most is his quick wit and unique way of encapsulating key training ideas in short "Dr. Dave-isms." One of my favorite Dr. Dave-isms is his Do-Do Rule. It goes like this:

"It's not how much training you DO, rather, it's how well you recover from the training you DO DO. Because, if you get injured or sick from DOing too much, you are in deep DOO DOO." Dr. Dave says, "The Do-Do Rule covers a multitude of sins for the runner and has never been proven wrong."

Is more better ?

The first "sin" that the Do-Do Rule addresses is the idea that more training is always better training. According to Dr. Dave, "More training isn't necessarily better. Doing the correct training is the answer to improved performance, not just more training. How much training is appropriate for you, of course, is the art of coaching and training for success in long distance races." Clues to correct training are everywhere though. Are you seeing performance improvements from training phase to training phase? Do you feel energized and excited for your next key workout? Do you feel like you could handle a little more volume and intensity? If so, you are likely training correctly.

Conversely, are you stuck at a performance plateau? Do you continually have injury problems or find yourself getting sick frequently? Are you simply unable to maintain a consistent training routine? If so, you may be in need of a training overhaul. It's ironic, though, that in these situations of overtraining, the tendency is to want to do more to improve your running, but you may simply need to do less.

The rut and the grave

Another Dr. Dave-ism goes, "The only difference between a rut and a grave is the depth." This, too, is a lesson from the Do-Do Rule. Martin believes, "Just establishing a routine or a habit of running is not the important thing. The important concept is that your training has a purpose and that you aren't just running out of habit but are actually working to become a better runner." For many runners, this suggests the need for more variety in training. Just as the measure of insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results, you must also vary your training to get different results. Find a pattern that works for you, but always add in some new workouts or training stress every few weeks. And, of course, add in extra recovery for the new stress.

Dr. Dave's DO-DO rule is simple and effective. Follow it this spring and summer for better training and racing results.

Recovery must match your breakdown

Following on the heels of more isn't always better, another lesson that the Do-Do Rule teaches us is that your training stress and your recovery must be in balance. "Training involves breakdown, and recovery must be appropriate to rebuild after this breakdown. Therefore, your recovery and training must match up, otherwise you'll be on your way to overtraining and soon find yourself in deep doo doo. It is important to realize that there is not a bottomless pit for training. You must allow sufficient recovery in order to maximize your performance improvement and avoid injury or illness from overtraining," Martin says.

Adequate recovery comes in several forms. The first is simply spacing your hard workouts properly across your training week. Don't try to squeeze everything in when your body is telling you that you need more recovery. In springtime, it's easy to want to put in two speed workouts each week along with a long run. After all, races are coming up and you want to be ready.

For many adult runners, however, you are better off just doing one intense session and allowing more recovery. Many masters runners find that this leads to better quality workouts ...which leads to more confidence ...which leads to better racing. And, remember, races are the most specific training we can do for other races later in the season.

Recovery can also be in the form of good nutrition and hydration. Take advantage of the window of opportunity within the first two hours post-workout. In this time, the body is super prepared to refuel and rehydrate. Have a healthy shake or

snack that puts protein and carbs back into your system and drink in the vital fluids lost in the workout.

Lastly, know that recovery needs change not just based on how much training you do, but also based on how much "life" you do. If work or family or other obligations suddenly get more stressful, you may have to increase your recovery time between workouts and reduce your training intensity.

Top 3 clues to spring overtraining:

1. Short fuse, moodiness and lack of motivation
2. Increased resting heart rate (>5 beats per minute)
3. Racing performances that fall short of what training results would predict

Copyright © 2008 [Running Times Magazine](#) - All Rights Reserved.