**BEACON HILL STRIDERS – Performance Running**

**Training Analysis: Sonia O’Sullivan**

Sonia O’Sullivan (Ireland) was one of the leading runners in the world in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Her roll of honour included: World XC Individual Gold medallist (1998); three times European Championships Gold medallist (1994: 3000m, & 1998: 5000m & 10000m); World Championship Gold medallist (1995: 5000m); World Championship Silver medallist (1993: 1500m); & Olympic Silver medallist (2000: 5000m). Her personal bests include: 3-58.85 (1500m); 8-21.64 (3000m); 14-41.02 (5000m); & 30-47.59 (10000m).

The following ‘Training Analysis’ is based on an Academy Newsletter provided to our group members in May 2015. … It is focused on providing advice for older teenage athletes (age 16-19) but the principles remain true for senior athletes also. …

**Academy Newsletter: No: 61**  
   
This week some absolute "**gold dust**" ...

As you will be well aware ... the training that I set, & the advice that I offer is based primarily on what I consider to be "**best practice**" as evidenced from the known training methods of successful athletes (past & present). ...

There is information out there but often it's quite generalised, & difficult to tease detail from ... But, from time to time something really revealing is published. ... So, I just couldn't wait to get this (**see link below**) out into the public domain, & specifically for your attention. ...

It's an article that appeared a couple of days ago on the 'Let's Run com' website ... & it includes a copy of the **hand-written training diary** for March 1998 of one of the top female runners of the past 50 years ... **Sonia O'Sullivan**

The article can be found here ...

<http://www.letsrun.com/news/2015/05/sonia-osullivan-shares-her-training-log-with-letsrun-com-how-did-the-villanova-grad-win-the-world-cross-country-title-twice-in-2008/>

No one reading this should attempt to copy the training that is detailed above ... this is individual to the athlete ... but we need to ask ... "what features (or principles) of the training can you apply to your own practice?" ...

So, what **Key Lessons** should we take away? ...

(& how might you apply these?)

1. Keep a **training diary**! ... & be detailed & specific in what you write in it.

2. Work towards **specific targets** ... some races should be more important than others ... identify which one/ones they are

3. The most significant feature of the training is the **overall training volume** ... In a month that included her key racing target, O'Sullivan averaged 98 miles per week (range 87-118) … volume/mileage matters! … For the older ones amongst you … 50 miles (6 Hours) per week is a good target

4. Include a **Long Run** ... For O'Sullivan this was up to 1 Hour 45 minutes (15 miles) ... For the more experienced amongst you this should be in the 70-75 minute range (occasionally longer)

5. Notice that O'Sullivan runs**twice per day**nearly every day ... Some of you (aged 16+), should be thinking of doing this on a couple of days per week, to increase your training frequency

(**Note**: a second training session could be X-Training e.g. swimming or cycling, which means that you can do this more often)

6. Most days should include only **low intensity running**, especially in the 2-3 days before (& after) competition

7. **Longer repetitions** (800m & 1000m in O'Sullivan's case) should be run at (or slightly quicker) than anticipated **race pace**

8. Running at **speeds much faster** than race pace should be limited to **shorter distances**(e.g. 100m/200m)

9. **Tapering**: too long a reduction in training will lead to a loss of fitness ... 2-3 days of lower volume is usually enough … & **reduce the amount & frequency of high intensity running** as you near race day ...

(**Note** the difference between days 1-12 in O'Sullivan's diary, compared with days 13-21)

10. Given all the global travelling that O’Sullivan did in the month featured, it’s very noticeable that she still maintains her training volume despite this … the lesson here is that you can squeeze in training even with a busy lifestyle if you are organised and committed enough … i.e. **make time for training** (no excuses!)

Remember ...

**DON'T attempt to copy the training (!!)  ...**

**Learn & apply the principles instead!**

Alan Maddocks (May 23rd, 2015)