

400 / 800 Meter Training for High School Athletes

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The 400/800 Challenge

- **The 400 is NOT a sprint like the 100/200**
- **The 800 is NOT a distance race like 1600-5K**
- **My observation = many coaches lean too heavily on their background**
 - **Sprint coaches- not enough endurance for 400**
 - **Distance coaches- not enough anaerobic work for 800**

Classifications / Definitions

- **Aerobic**
- **Anaerobic**
- **Speed Development – 400 multiple days year-round, 800 once/week year-round**
 - **40-60 yards accelerations / full speed / “swing down”**
- **Volume per week**
 - **400 runners: 15-20/week**
 - **800 runners: 30-40/week**
- **Avoid no-man’s land (“prolonged sprinting”)**

Siblings and Cousins

- **400 and 800 are siblings (complex percentages)**
- **400-meter dash is 60% anaerobic / 40% aerobic**
- **800-meter run is 60% aerobic / 40% anaerobic**
- **100/200 and 1600 are cousins of the 400**

Heart of the Team

- **Four training groups**
 - **Short sprints (100/200) – including 4x1, 100/110 hurdles**
 - **400 – including 4x4 and 4x8, 300 hurdles**
 - **800 – including 4x4 and 4x8**
 - **Distance (1600/3200) – non-relay runners**
- **Why are the 400 and 800 the heart of the team? High versatility.**

What are they missing?

- **400 athletes – typically have speed, lack race-specific endurance**
- **800 athletes – typically have endurance, need race-specific speed**
- **Importance of cross country season (for 800)**
- **Athletes win from their strengths, but you cannot ignore their weaknesses**
- **Over-riding principle: if leg speed is equal, then it comes down to aerobic strength**

400 Meter Dash Training

- **Their own training group**
- **What happens after 40 seconds?**
- **Volume 200s**
- **Overdistance Intervals**
- **Event Day workouts**

400-Specific Endurance

- **We are not training distance runners**
- **Volume 200s = 2000-3200 meters to begin, progress down from there**
- **Overdistance intervals = 2000 meters max, decreasing from there**
- **Recovery time is key**

800 Meter Run Training

- **Higher need for aerobic endurance**
- **Ability to “tolerate” lactate buildup at 15+ mph (boys), 13+ mph (girls)**
- **Two types of 800 runners -- XC and non-XC**
- **Threshold runs**
- **Long runs (early in training)**
- **VO₂ Intervals**

800-Specific Endurance

- **Winter – pretty vanilla, long runs, threshold runs (tempos/fartlek runs)**
- **VO₂ intervals – starting in January (4-5k in volume)**
- **Race pace intervals – a couple times in March, a lot in April/May**
- **Fast intervals – faster than 800 pace, May**

My favorite April & May workouts for 800 runners

- **Race Pace Intervals – 6-8x300 (3 minute rest), 3-4x400 (5 minutes rest)**
- **Down Ladders – 600, 500, 400, 300, 200 (avoid the 100 – no-man’s land)**
- **Sebastian Coe accelerations workout (200, 220, 240, 260, 280, 300)**

My favorite April & May workouts for 800 runners

- **Split 800s (with variations)**
 - **500 hard, rest 1 minute, 300 hard – 3 sets, 5-8 minutes rest in between**
 - **First part = hard enough to build up some lactate**
 - **600 / 200 is harder to hit right pace on first part**
 - **Split 700s – 500/200 or 400/300**
- **Balance fast intervals workouts with races -- both take a toll on the athlete**

Peaking / Tapering

- **Longer race distance = more important it is to NOT taper (reduce volume)**
- **Cross country = don't taper ... the 5K relies on 95%+ aerobic energy**
- **Solutions:**
- **400 – Reloading Weeks (every 3rd week in April/May)**
- **800 – Limit the reduction and delay until 10-14 days before championship meet**

400 runners going up to 800/4x800

- **Tempo runs (1-2 miles)**
- **Fartlek runs (20 minutes)**
- **Long(ish) runs (30 minutes at conversational pace)**
- **An extra rep of overdistance intervals (ex: 3x800)**
- **Incorporate ladders, with varying distances (ex: 500-down ladder)**

800 runners going down to 400/4x400

- **They need more work @ 400 race pace (speed development days)**
- **They need to regularly run on 4x4s on meet days**
- **Other than that, don't change much**