

Crafting a Seasonal Plan

If you haven't picked a few athletic goals for next year, the holiday season is a good time to do so. You've probably fallen off the wagon with your regular routine and are eating lots of yummy treats – which combine to lead to loss of fitness and a bit of weight gain. It's not the end of the world, but don't dilly dally on your return to routine in the new year.

You should always pick a goal that is meaningful to you, is reasonable to achieve within a set time frame, and with some upper and lower limits on success. Written differently, it means pick something within a year or so that you can target. Pick something that is challenging but not impossible. Allow yourself some wiggle room on what will constitute success – if all goes well you can hit that super great result, but if life gets in the way you can be satisfied with a result that will still make you smile.

There are a few key attributes that will help you meet this goal.

Make it a concrete goal.

Instead of an open-ended goal like "I want to run faster," make it "I want to run a sub-20 minute 5k in 2013." Set a time limit deadline and a time or performance specific.

Create milestones along the way.

20:30 at May 5k

20:15 at July 5k (could be slower due to summer heat – just an example)

20:00 or under at September – October 5k

Adopt a specific training approach.

There are many ways to achieve athletic goals. If you mix and match conflicting approaches throughout your season, it decreases your chances for success. Pick a specific approach that suits your style and temperament, and stick with that. An approach that works for your best friend will not necessarily work for you. This is where professional coaching can come in handy.

Share your goal.

Nothing helps like a helping hand. Finding a group of athletes to join you along the way is terrific fun and will help keep you all motivated and on track. That 530AM pre-dawn workout is a lot easier with five other smiling faces.

Be consistent.

The quickest way to derail your training and lose your progress is by being inconsistent at any point. Miss a few days here, another few sessions here, and you're off track before you know it. Remember, some training time is always better than no training time, with rest periods / injury recovery being the exception. In other words, if you're really busy



and won't make your one hour run with intervals, a 20-30 minute easy jog is still much better than skipping the session entirely.

Be positive.

Not every session will be great and not every week will go perfectly. The trend of your training is what's important. Find something positive in every session or event, even if it's just "Hey, I made it here!"

Be flexible.

Life will get in the way. You'll get a promotion or have a baby. You'll have to take an extended family trip. The car will have a breakdown. The bike will break down. You'll buy a new house. Life, family, and work related events take a toll on your total stress levels, and you'll need to adjust your short term and/or long term goals to meet the new situation. If you stick with realistic but challenging goals within your new framework, it will help you achieve fitness, a healthy lifestyle, and personal satisfaction. Ultimately, that is what athletic training is really all about.

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