

Strength and Endurance

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by Annie Marais, Free State Middle Distance Item coordinator, VSAAV Level III

When talking about strength and training primary school middle distance running, I am sure most people will have some or other problem ...and it usually comes from the novice trainer/coach! Top coaches talk a different language when it comes to strength training of very young children – and it is clear that all of them include this factor into their athletes training.

I would like to tell you my story, so that you don't make the same "mistake"!

In 2014 at SA's my u/12 boy ran a 3:38 in the 1200m. This time made me proud and it was a PB [personal best time] for him, but still he came 8th in the competition...the winning time was 3:31! I realized that my athlete needed something more to be more competitive at national level. So I mixed in a lot of power exercises into the next year's programme. It looked to me that my 1200m-athletes needed more strength to carry them into a competitive position.

So I put all my middle distance [800m/1200m/1500m] through some strength training:

75% of my training time in the off-season

50% of my training time in the pre-season

15-20% of my training time in the competition season.

Let me be very clear, this was not basic strength training, in other words, no moving of iron in a gymnasium setup. [Maybe

the high school and senior athlete could look at this]. The strength training I am advocating is more specific strength training like ...

Circuit training

Plyometrics/bounding

Running uphill and other inclined runs

Resistance training like pulling tyres

Steps

But I must confess I also rethought my endurance training load in the program.

So I put all my middle distance [800m/1200m/1500m] also through some endurance training:

75% of my training time in the off-season

50% of my training time in the pre-season

20- 25% of my training time in the competition season.

This helped my athletes to cope better with fatigue and improved their tolerance for higher levels of lactic acid. The heart rate volume increased to let the heart carry oxygen more quickly to the muscles. This also developed a good stamina base before going into the harder training sessions like speed and speed endurance. Examples of muscle endurance training exercises are ...

Road running 1 – 10km

Cross Country during the track and field off-season

Longer fartleks

Interval training

Terrace running

Polish Cross Country

The 800m/1200m/1500m events are becoming more brutal and aggressive events and plain, natural talent is not enough anymore. The result of my improved strength and endurance training was a gold medal in the 2015 SA's, Boys under 13, 800m (2:07min)