

Using Your vVO2max for Interval Training

The six weeks after a vVO2max test are often the busiest time in a runner's life. Shocking that a simple six-minute exam could create such a productive frenzy, but the vVO2max effort can do everything – evaluate fitness, set up stunning workouts, and even establish goal pace for an important race.

The test is straightforward. After a warm-up which fires up your nervous system, on a day when you are recovered and feeling great, run as far as you can on the track in just six minutes. Measure your distance covered by counting laps and eyeballing lengths from familiar track marks or using a hardware-store's measuring wheel (if you have a GPS device, simply run on any flat surface with your contraption in play). Cool down in either case, and you are ready for six remarkable weeks of training.

Once you have your six-minute distance, it's easy to calculate vVO2max. Let's say that you run 1537 meters in six minutes, for example (bear in mind that the following math will work for any distance). 1537 divided by 360 seconds (the total time of the test in seconds) = 4.27 meters per second. That's your vVO2max.

Now, 4.27 meters per second does not exactly produce much harmony when we are out for a run. Most of us wouldn't know whether we were hitting 4.27 meters per second during a session or not. Not good, since the goal of vVO2max workouts is to run precisely at vVO2max.

So, let's always convert vVO2max into a 400-meter tempo - that will make things much-more manageable. 400 meters divided by 4.27 meters per second = 93.7 seconds per 400 meters. For convenience, let's call it 94 seconds per 400 meters. We're now ready to set up some brilliant, high-intensity workouts.

For example, a few days after your test, you could run 10 X 200 meters in 47 seconds each (that's 94 seconds per 400 tempo). Warm up well before a workout like this, and of course cool down and stretch afterward (we'll deal with optimal warm-ups, cool-downs, and stretching in future blogs).

By dictates of the Billat Convention, recovery intervals inside a vVO2max session are always equal in time duration to the work intervals and consist of easy running, not walking. So, in our 10 X 200 meters in 47-seconds-each example, you would jog for 47 seconds after every 47-second work interval. There's not much science behind this, but – anecdotally – making the recovery intervals longer can harm the blood-lactate and oxygen-consumption characteristics of the workout (which you don't want to do), and trimming the recovery intervals can make it difficult to hit all of your work intervals in the sweet bull's eye.

Progressing with your vVO2max workouts is important, so during week two you could perform something like 6 X 400 in 94 seconds each. Progression with vVO2max training involves lengthening the work intervals and the total time spent at vVO2max per session.

As long as the 400 workout has gone well, week three could see 8 X 400 in 94 each, with 94 recoveries.

Week four would then have 6 X 600 in $(94 + 47) = 141$ seconds (2:21) each, with 2:21 jog recoveries.

Weeks five and six would then be set up for 5 X 800 in 3:08 each, with 3:08 restorations.

A few rules to remember: Conduct one vVO2max session per week, not two. Carry out vVO2max training on days when you are well-rested. Don't fall into a depression if you miss a few splits here and there – just relax and keep working; the results will come. And don't use work intervals which are more than a few seconds longer than three minutes.

After six weeks, you'll enjoy a shiny new lactate-threshold speed and enhanced economy, things which vVO2max training improves. And of course you'll probably have a faster vVO2max, too. Which means it will be time for a six-minute vVO2max re-test! And then – most likely – a subsequent, well-deserved upgrade in your training intensity for your next six-week training period. After all, you'll be a better runner.

This is essentially copied from Owen Anderson's blog at <http://www.educatedrunner.com/Blog.aspx>