

GETTING DOWN & DIRTY TO GET DOWN & DIRTY

In the last few years there has been a lot of hoopla about Adventure Races, Mud Runs and extreme outdoor events such as the Tough Mudder™, Spartan Race™ and Warrior Dash™ (to name a few.)

Unlike a 5k run, a 10k run or even a sprint Triathlon, these runs require very unique and out of the “box” training (partial pun intended). However, if you live in the Northeast like I do, training outdoors in the winter can be a little tricky (especially after the winter that we just had!). Don’t get me wrong, when I train for myself or for my Clients, I live and breathe by the S.A.I.D principle; Specific Adaptation to Imposed Demand. But realistically speaking, do we really need to practice crawling in a mile of mud (with electrical wires over head!?) in order to get ready for the torture and mayhem that is in store for us? It’s bad enough you literally signed and initialed your life away. Let’s not tempt fate any more than we have to. Trust me, some of this stuff you only want to do once anyway!

OK ...how should one get ready to run up a half pipe covered in mud and have enough strength to either pull oneself up or at the very least allow someone to grab you anywhere (and I do mean anywhere!) they can to get you to safety?

When you’re stuck in a winter wonderland, a gym is your best resource to build the strength, power, endurance and balance you’ll need to have a fun and enjoyable race. An indoor track or treadmill is a great place to start to build up a strong cardio base. The distance of the race will dictate how far most of your training runs should be. For a 5k Mud Run or Adventure Race, you should be able to run that distance in addition to being able to withstand intervals of pushups, burpies and squat jumps. However, in races of 10k or more, you’ll want to split your focus evenly between strength and endurance. I’ve seen many half and full marathoners that got crucified because they didn’t train for strength and power along with the distance!

Remember, these events are a true test of your total fitness and energy. In these races, you will be constantly switching back and forth between running, jumping, pulling, dragging or propelling your body over walls and through sewer pipes. The way to train for

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these events is vary your workouts by constantly switching between aerobic and anaerobic exercise.

I recommend building your program up gradually. Realistically speaking, you should give yourself at least 3 months to train for one of these events.

Here is a sample workout I used when training for the Tough Mudder in Vermont at Mt. Snow Ski Area:

Dynamic Warm-Up – Start with 2 Cycles and build up to at least 4 Cycles

- Run ¼ mile at 10% incline on the treadmill
- Run ½ mile at no incline on either the treadmill or track
- 30 burpies
- 50 bodyweight squats
- 25 back rows each arm in plank position
- 1 min of mountain climbers

After a workout like this (or any exercise session for that matter), don’t forget how important the role of nutrition is in preparing your body for competition or for your health in general. One of the benefits to training in the gym is that my favorite protein recovery shake is only a few steps away. The natural fruit sugars and whey protein mix is perfect for helping my body get back the energy that I just burned and the protein that it needs to rebuild my muscle tissue. You’ve got a short period of time after exercise to get that stuff in your body or you may have just worked out for nothing.

OK, now you’re all set. Train smart, eat right, run hard, have fun and I’ll see you at the finish line!

NUTRITION IS ALSO A KEY COMPONENT IN FUELING UP ON THE DAY OF A STRENGTH AND ENDURANCE RUN. START YOUR BIG DAY WITH A BLEND OF FAST DIGESTING HIGH-GLYCEMIC AND SLOW-DIGESTING, LOW-GLYCEMIC CARBOHYDRATES. THIS WILL TOP OFF YOUR TANK FROM ANY GLYCOGEN (STORED SUGAR) THAT YOUR BODY BURNED WHILE YOU WERE SLEEPING AND GIVE A BASE OF PROLONGED ENERGY FOR THE WORK TO COME. PAIR THE CARBS WITH A LEAN PROTEIN AND LIMITED FAT SO THAT YOUR MEAL IS DIGESTED AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE. LAST BUT NOT LEAST, HYDRATE! GETTING A CHARLIE HORSE FROM DEHYDRATION IN THE FIRE PIT CAN REALLY CHANGE YOUR DAY FOR THE WORSE.

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Eat Well. Live Well (and Long).

Jay is the Personal Training Manger at Elite Health and Fitness in Stoughton, MA. He has completed 5 Tough Mudders and is currently training for his 6th.