OBR - The 3 Runs That Make You Faster When You Only Have 3 Days

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[00:00:00] This runner runs three days a week and keeps getting faster. This runner also runs three days a week and hasn't improved in six months.

[00:00:08] Same days, same shoes, same body. The only thing that's different is what they do on those three days, and by the end of this episode, you'll know exactly which runner you are.

[00:00:19] In this episode, you're gonna learn why more easy running is the wrong fix when you've only got three days,

[00:00:24] the three runs that actually move the needle and how hard each should feel, two tiny bolt-on days almost nobody talks about,

[00:00:31] and a free training plan to help you take all this information and put it into action in your own running life.

[00:00:37] I'm Daren D. Lake, certified run coach, and I've been running and figuring out this whole how many days a week to run, et cetera, for 30 years almost, and here's why I can talk about the three days a week.

[00:00:49] In my off-season, I drop down to about two or three runs a week myself, and I keep almost all my speed doing exactly what I'm about to show you

[00:00:58] Easy running works. It really does, but it works because of volume.

[00:01:03] All that slow, quiet zone 2 magic, the bigger the heart, the extra tiny blood vessels, the aerobic engine growing underneath you, et cetera, et cetera.

[00:01:10] That only shows up when you've been stacking five, six, seven, 11 runs a week. Yes, I can get up to 11 runs a week training for marathons and some 5 and 10Ks. But the easy miles have room to pile up week after week when you do that many runs per week. That's the whole mechanism. That's the whole framework.

[00:01:28] Accumulated easy time. You don't have that room, though. You've only got three days. So if you spend all three shuffling along easy, you're running a watered-down version of a plan built for somebody with double your time. You get neither thing.

[00:01:41] Not enough easy volume to get the base reward and the aerobic buildup and the foundation, and you really don't get enough hard work to actually get faster. You end up in the worst place for runners, and it's the gray zone. It's not easy enough to recover, and it's not hard enough to improve.

[00:01:59] It's a weird trap because it feels productive. You're out there. You're getting kind of fit. You're sweating. You're tired after, so surely it's working. It really isn't. I lived there for years as a new runner, and it felt like training,

[00:02:09] but all I was doing was spinning my wheels in the mud, going nowhere, not even fast. The fix isn't running more. You don't have the days for more. The fix is making each of your three days do a completely different job

[00:02:20] Now here's where it gets a bit dangerous. You can try to build those three runs yourself. Guess the paces, stack them in the wrong order, and quietly dig the same hole I lived for years. Another eight weeks in the gray zone with nothing to show for it,

[00:02:32] and you end up blowing up at the 18-mile, 30-kilometer mark of your marathon and go, "What happened? Why me? Why is the universe after me?" Blah, blah, blah.

[00:02:39] Or you can skip all that guessing because I already mapped out the whole thing into a free 30-day plan. Every run dropped into the right spot so you don't scramble the order.

[00:02:48] So all three runs, uh, precisely put into the weeks.

[00:02:53] If you do the 30-day training plan twice and you're not faster or feeling better, email me and I'll refund you. You pay nothing, so I'll go and do strides or something. You get it.

[00:03:03] Go and get that free training plan right here at the QR code or below if you're watching on YouTube or in your podcast player, wherever you're listening or watching this in the show notes.

[00:03:12] So what do these three runs actually look like out on the road? All right,

[00:03:15] when you only run three days, every run has to earn its spot. No junk. Three runs, they have three different jobs. One run is your fast day, short intervals, VO2 stuff, VO2 max stuff,

[00:03:25] 30 to 40 minutes total including your warm-up and cool down.

[00:03:28] This should feel like a seven or eight out of 10. You're breathing loud. Legs, they feel like you kinda want this to end. They, they get heavy and it gets hard. So it's, it's a new flavor of hard, and you're just in and out.

[00:03:40] So something like short reps with a real rest between, proper two to three minutes where you're actually pushing. I like this to be you could do 12 by 400 at your current 5K pace,

[00:03:50] four by four minutes at 5K-ish pace with a three-minute rest, et cetera. This is the single run that makes you faster,

[00:03:56] and it's the exact one the just go easy crowd told you to skip.

[00:04:00] And it's the reason you have stuck.

[00:04:01] All right, so run two is your moderate day, 45 to 60 minutes, steady tempo feel. A lot of people, tempo, it's really vague. A five to six out of 10 effort, comfortably hard.

[00:04:12] You should be able to do this for about 60 minutes and another extra 10 to 15 minutes.

[00:04:16] You can get a few words out, but you don't really wanna hold a conversation. Now I know I just spent a whole section telling you about the gray zone and don't get into it, blah, blah, blah.

[00:04:24] So let me be clear because this might confuse people

[00:04:27] The gray zone is being lazy on a hard day and sloppy on an easy day by accident. That is the gray zone. It's what you shouldn't be doing. Sometimes running in this pace is what you should be doing, and sometimes running too slow is not what you should be doing. This is on purpose, aimed at a real target.

[00:04:43] Totally different things.

[00:04:44] I talked about the gray zone actually in an episode up above, or you could get the, uh, the link below in the show notes or YouTube description, so if you wanna learn more about the gray zone. Quick confession because I keeps it real. For years, I ran my moderate days at my 5K, 10K-ish pace because it felt awesome in the moment.

[00:05:00] That endorphin buzz, the I'm a real runner feeling. Then I destroyed the next three or four days after, and I wondered why I never got better really. I just felt like trash. Tempo Tuesday, you know, Threshold Thursday, whatever. Getting nowhere fast for years. Do not be me.

[00:05:15] All right, so your run three is your long easy day.

[00:05:18] 60 to 90 minutes. Try to push closer to 90 minutes. Super chill, two out of four. You can actually talk like this and have a conversation. This is the only run where you get to be slow on purpose, and it's your base builder.

[00:05:28] You might even have to walk up some hills, and that's absolutely fine. Again, chatting with a friend. You can put the podcast on. Ego switched way off. The pros do this. You should do this, too.

[00:05:36] If you finish feeling like you could've kept going, that's when you know you did it right

[00:05:40] All right, so that's all your running sorted,

[00:05:41] but the runs on their own, they're not the whole plan. Now the piece that separates you from every other three-day-a-week runner, two strength days, proper strength, 20 to 30 minutes. If you can do 30 minutes, it's great,

[00:05:52] . And here's the trick that you need. You attach them to the days that you're already out running, right after your moderate run and right after your long run, so you're not carving two brand-new sessions out of your week and putting new clothes on and taking a shower and driving there and wasting all that time of the before and after sort of and thinking about it.

[00:06:09] 20 minutes of basic strength, nothing fancy. You could probably get in, depending on a lot of things, about anywhere from six to eight sets, so about four to six different exercises .

[00:06:21] And I actually talk about that more in depth, the episode here or below, about the best 10 strength exercises in the least amount of time for runners.

[00:06:28] You can also focus on strides at the end. They're short, smooth, fast, little bursts. I call it controlled fast running. You're not sprinting. Uh, anywhere from 15 to 25 seconds each. You build up slowly over time, many, many weeks and months, and you'll feel quick without straining, and again, you don't sprint.

[00:06:44] So two different jobs right there. You got strength and you got strides. The strength is your insurance policy. I love this. It's the thing that stops all those little nagging feelings and the

aches and tightness from turning into actually injuries that end all the new runners before they even get fit, and it's not my opinion.

[00:07:00] It's one of the few add-ons that research pretty much and every coach agree on because a bit of run-specific strength work and strides and hills, et cetera, but we won't get into that. They improve your running economy,

[00:07:11] which is how much fuel you burn at a given pace, so you get faster without running actually more.

[00:07:17] It's amazing. You just get more efficient at running

[00:07:19] And the strides keep your legs sharp and springy and spry and loose and bouncy even though most of your running is slow or moderate.

[00:07:27] You don't want to turn into that one-speed diesel engine where you just go at marathon pace all the time.

[00:07:32] Strides wake that up.

[00:07:33] So many people miss this. They think the answer to being stuck is more running. It's almost never more running. You got only three days. It's better running, it's smarter running, plus the two bolt-ons, strength, strides, that cost you 40 minutes. So at the end of the week you're gonna cool down and just scroll anyway on your phone so you might as well do it.

[00:07:51] But there's a leak I didn't fix here.

[00:07:52] Those three runs pour energy into your legs and if your form is spilling it back out with every single step, you're filling a bucket with a hole in the bottom.

[00:07:59] So before you run one of those, of the three runs,

[00:08:03] Watch the video on strength training below if you're on YouTube. Click that video right there or the link is in the, uh, show notes of whatever podcast player you're watching or listening

[00:08:11] And you'll figure out how to plug that hole, run more economical and more efficiently, get faster with actually less effort