

## CMA ON-LINE SEMINAR NOTES — MID-DISTANCE RUNNING — JAN. 16, 2022

### PANELIST GREG ATHAYDE

My name is Greg Athayde. I am currently the Provincial Director for Manitoba on the CMA Board. I am also the chair of the Masters Committee for Athletics Manitoba.

I have been a runner for most of my life running middle distances in High school, where I would best describe myself as “King of the slow heats”. I ran at the University of Manitoba and following graduation, competed into my early thirties, until family happened. My memory is getting bad, but I think my bests are sub 3:54 for 1500 and sub 1:53 for 800. I did do some road racing on the side and took up running marathons in my forties ... I mean, how hard could it be! My best time ever (and as a Master) was a 2:42.

Once I retired, I decided to try Masters Athletics and as noted, joined the AM and CMA boards. My original plan was to run the WMA championships in Toronto, but then COVID happened which put a hold on getting back on the track. This past summer I ran on the track again for the first time in over twenty years. I ran 5:13 for 1500 and 2:26 for 800. I am still trying to decide which is better ... running all out for about 2 and a half minutes and then coughing up a lung for 3 hours after or just running the marathon for 3 hours!

My plans are to hopefully go to Finland this summer to run the WMA Outdoor championships. I have a couple of goals to see how fast I can run the 800 and 1500 events ... to see if I can come close to my personal age graded bests and become “King of the old heats”.

#### **Motivation:**

I do Middle distance running because 1.) I was never fast enough to be a sprinter and 2.) I got bored running long distances. Having said that, in my mind, anyway, I do have a respectable amount of speed as well as ability to run distances. When I was younger, I enjoyed the challenge of running almost all out for a relatively short period of time and other than having to cough up a lung, the races are over pretty quickly. As a Masters athlete, I am hoping to get back to the challenge of middle distance running. It's not just the racing, but the variety of training that is required to be a good middle distance runner that keeps me excited about doing middle distance running again.

## Training Tips:

My typical training week tries to work on a variety of different elements required for middle distance running. This is just a typical week, but it is dependent on where I am in my training cycle and proximity to competition.

Day 1 – Long Run + Abdominals	Train like a distance runner day! Total volume approximately 25% of weekly volume. E.g. If total weekly volume is 60K, long run would be 15K. Goal building Aerobic capacity
Day 2 – Rest/Easy Run/Cross Train + Strength	Goal Strength training, Recovery
Day 3 – Long Intervals/Tempo + Abdominals	E.g. 800-2000M Intervals with shorter rest; 20-30 minute tempo; Hill workout Goal building Aerobic threshold
Day 4 – Rest/Easy Run/Cross Train + Strength	Goal Strength training, Recovery
Day 5 – Sprint Session + Abdominals	Train like a sprinter day! Intervals no longer than 60M. Lots of rest between intervals. Total workout volume less than 1000M. E.g. 10x50M with 3 minute rest Goal building speed
Day 6 – Short Intervals + Abdominals	E.g. 200-600M Intervals with longer rest Goal building Anaerobic threshold
Day 7 – Rest/Easy Run/Cross Train + Strength	Goal Strength training, Recovery

## Notes:

Workout days include Warm-up, Cool-down, Abdominal exercises

Actual workouts and pacing are dependent of training phase, proximity to competition and other factors.

As a Master's Athlete, remember to be flexible and adjust your schedule according to how you are feeling and other things going on in your life!



## **Racing tips:**

- Have SMART Goals for each race
  - Specific (Win a medal, Run a specific time, Make a final, Beat someone)
  - Measurable (Run a specific time)
  - Achievable (Is this doable based on your training)
  - Relevant (to specific race)
  - Time bound (to specific race)
- Have a realistic plan to achieve the goals in your race
  - Pace
  - Position (Run in Front, tuck in behind)
  - When to kick

## **Other Points:**

Speed and Strength training are not just for Middle distance runners, but for all runners who want to get faster and stay relatively injury free.

## **PANELIST COURTNEY BABCOCK**

Courtney may be more well known for her younger competitive years with Canada, but she has also embarked on a successful Masters career, and is a coach of Masters. She was born in Chatham Ontario but went to high school in Grade 12 and 13 in Toronto. Interesting that she came to track then, coached by Ross Ristuccio at UTTC, and actually medalled in basketball at OFSAA (provincial championships), not in track. When she went to University of Michigan, she was an 8 time All-American/NCAA champ. Cool trivia — she and her dad are only father-daughter pair in U of M Hall of Fame, though his entry is for hockey. Next she spent 14 years as a pro, and was an Olympian in 2004. She held the Canadian record in the 5K for 16 years with 14:54.96 at the World Champs in 2003, and the 10K record for 12 years, in 31:44. She is 4th fastest Canadian woman in the 1500, with 4:01.99. And then we have her Masters career, with golds from Budapest in 2014, in the 1500, in the W40-44, and 2 golds in Malaga in 2018, in 800 and 1500 in W45-49. She was also part of a 4x800 World record relay in 2016. Note - these were her first and second races in 800 metres since university. Courtney is also the owner of Key Running and Retreats, where she coaches online, providing training plans, coaching, and strength training classes, and hosting retreats around the world. She's also the mother of 2 boys, ages 11 and 14, and has been married for 18 years to her husband Miles. True fact.

## **PANELIST DENNIS LANG**

A lifelong resident of Winnipeg, Dennis has been involved with competitive running since 1964 after watching Canadian Bill Crothers win a silver medal in the 800-meter race at the Tokyo Olympics. As a masters runner he has participated in over 400 races on the track, road and cross-country in events from 400- meters to the marathon. As a 55+ master he has set thirteen new Canadian Masters age group records and has ranked number one in Canada repeatedly in his events. At the 2011 World Masters Athletics Championships he won Silver and Bronze medals in the 1500m and 800m events and was ranked second and third in the masters world rankings in those events respectively. Now 70 he is still actively competing in races on all surfaces and looks forward to continuing his training and racing for years to come. A passionate supporter of “Athletics for Life” he hopes he can be a role model for bringing new masters age Canadians into the sport. When not training and racing he enjoys reading up on the history of competitive running, biographies of its leading athletes and coaches, and the evolution of training practises.

## **Mental Preparation for Racing**

What I would like to focus on during this part of the program is **“how to raise your game”** or in other words **“how to get better results in your key races through mental preparation.”** As masters athletes why do we train so diligently? Most of us train with the intention of competing in track races. **Racing is our reward** for our training efforts - yet very little attention gets paid to **learning to race well**. In my experience **racing is a skill that can be learned and improved on**. When I set myself the goal of winning a medal at the 2011 World Masters Athletics Championships I knew physical training wouldn't be enough, successful mental training would also have to take place in parallel with the hard physical training. At this point in my running career, I knew positively that **your mind was the key** to producing your best effort **when it really counts**. Your mind can be your greatest ally or your worst enemy in a race. I going to repeat that - **“your mind can be your greatest ally or your worst enemy in a race”**. We all know of runners who have performed well below their abilities in important races because of pressure, stage fright, loss of focus or mental letdown. It can happen to the very best of elite runners – it happened to Canada's greatest middle distance runner ever - Bruce Kidd at the 1964 Tokyo Olympics and to marathon legend Bill Rodgers at the 1976 Montreal Olympics. Both were expected to compete for medals in their events yet they had the worst race of their lives - because even with all their preparation and experience they still failed **to get into race ready mode** on race day or to say it differently - **they lost the head game** in the biggest race of their lives.

In my bio Karla mentioned that I had set 13 Canadian Masters age group records. Would it surprise you to learn that in each of those 13 record setting races I started the race with the intention of breaking the age group record? I knew I could do it from my

training results and started the race **mentally prepared to do it**. At the 2011 Worlds Masters Championships I started the 800m and 1500m finals with the intention of winning a medal. I knew I could run the time I needed to be a medal contender - **provided I won the head game** to give my best on that big stage that day. These things don't just happen because you want them to - you have to **make them happen** through your planning and preparation. **Your prior preparation is always the key to your racing success**. You **race as you train** and that includes the mind.

My first recommendation to prepare yourself mentally for an important track race, is to realize and constantly remind yourself – **regardless of the stage it is still only a track meet** – and you have done this before. Also, all your competitors are experiencing the same pre-race stresses you are. They are **not super human**.

My second recommendation for going into a big race is - **you have to have a plan** on how you are going to comport yourself at the event venue. In other words, you need to repeatedly **rehearse mentally - visualizing in your mind** - all the things you need to do **to be race ready on race day** - and be ready for **surprises**, they do happen. Part of your plan should be exercising **emotional control** and staying calm and relaxed at all times - as you are going to be under more stress than usual. Keep your **stress level** under control through **positive thinking**. Above all keep **negative thoughts** out of your head or they will affect your performance.

My third recommendation is to exercise **absolute attention control**. **Stay focused**, don't get distracted by things in your new environment and **stay plugged into your race mission**. **Keep in mind** you are there to be **a competitor first** to perform at your best. You are **not there** to be a tourist - sight seeing / or a spectator - sitting in the stands all day, or doing excessive socializing and going to parties. You do those things after your events are over. If your event has heats - after your heat is over - do your warm down away from your rivals and then leave the stadium to rest. **Adequate rest and recovery are key to your race performance**. It is usually not a good practice to watch your rivals in their heats and possibly get psyched out for the final. These are a small sacrifices to make for a potentially **big** payoff – that is **a top shelf performance in your race**.

My fourth recommendation is about **environmental management**. Familiarize yourself with all aspects of your new environment. Visit the stadium before your first event and do a walk through of the facilities. Know where things are before race day. If you are in a cross country or road race go over the course thoroughly so you know it well before your race. Know where you are going to have your meals and other things. **Familiarity leads to calmness**. As the Aussies say “**no worries mate**”.

My fifth recommendation is to **learn as much you can about your fellow competitors**. Know who the medal contenders are and what their seed times are so you can gauge your prospects in the race.

Finally, **and most importantly, believe in yourself**. It is absolutely crucial to your racing success. Your confidence comes from your **thorough** preparation both physically, through consistent hard training, and mentally - through your **planning and mind control**. The more you are prepared the greater your confidence and calmness on race day. **Racing up to your ability** - requires you to be relaxed in both body and mind.

The last thing I want to say on this topic is - the more experience you have racing at big events the better for you. Experience counts **big** particularly on the biggest stages. In 2007 I had epiphany after learning the 2011 World Masters Athletics Championships would be held in Sacramento, California 2 months after I turned 60. I could see the stars lining up for me and the tremendous opportunity now available. I made my **life changing** decision to prepare for winning medal at those World Masters Championships. I started by making a **4 year plan** to prepare completely to win a medal. Part of my plan **was to prepare myself mentally to perform well on the biggest stage of all** - the World Championships – by going to lesser championships like the Canadian Masters , the US Masters, the North and Central American World Masters, and the World Masters Indoors in Kamloops in 2010. I used those events to prepare and rehearse for the big one in 2011 and to **practice and perfect** my big event management techniques. I won 2 medals at Sacramento.

In closing I would like to leave you with this thought **Success is not an accident** - it is the result of your preparation and execution.

#### **PANELIST MARIA ZAMBRANO**

Maria was born in Colombia, South America, and came to Canada when she was in her mid-twenties. As an open athlete, during her 30s, between 2001 and 2010, she

represented Canada on 3 Ekiden teams (in China, Korea, and Japan); 2 Cross-country teams (in Switzerland and Belgium), a World Half-Marathon championship in New Delhi, and on a Mountain Running team in Slovenia. To show her range, her personal bests were 4:33 in the 1500, 9:51 in the 3000, 16:12 in the 5000, and 1:15:06 in the Half Marathon. As a Masters runner, she holds Canadian records in W45 indoors (1500 metres at 4:43 and 3000 metres at 9:54) and in her present age group of W50 (3000 metres outdoors at 10:16 and in the Half Marathon at 1:18:16). I hope that's registering with you that her Masters times are not that far off from her competitive Open times, 9:51 then and 9:54 in W45 1500 and 1:15 then and 1:18 in 2021! She also took 1st place in the CMA Cross-country Championships in 2013 and 2019. Maria fits in her training around the lives of her 2 school-age kids, and has a supportive running husband.

### **Racing Tips for Middle Distance Runners**

1. Practice Race Pace in training. You can use a running calculator to find out your race pace, for example: <https://runsmartproject.com/calculator/> This will help to calculate the appropriate training paces for various workouts necessary to help you reach your goals.
2. Have a practice track race or time trial to be familiar with the routine of race day, including food, racing gear, warm up time, check in, bathroom time, delays in schedule, etc...
3. Practice visualizing your race each day for few days before it happens, imagine yourself running with a good form and maintaining an even pace, pushing the pace after half way and kicking hard in the last part of the race.
4. Stay positive, even putting a smile on your face makes a difference as it releases chemicals into your brain and makes you feel better.
5. Be grateful for people that organize and volunteer for the events and for the family and friend's support.

### **Recommended Books:**

- Let Your Mind Run (Deena Kastor)
- Run Strong Stay Hungry (Jonathan Beverly)

## **Recovery Elements:**

- Foam roller (body massage)
- Massage stick (calves and shins)
- Tennis ball (plantar fascia)

## **UPCOMING MASTERS COMPETITIONS TO CONSIDER**

- **USATF Indoor Championships** - March 18-20, 2022 - New York, NY
- **Canadian Masters Athletics Indoor Championships** - March 25-27, 2022 - St. John NB
- **World Masters Athletics Outdoor Championships** - June 29 to July 10, 2022 - Tampere, Finland
- **USATF Outdoor Championships** - July 28-31, 2022 - Lexington, KY
- **Canadian Masters Outdoor Championships** - August - Regina, SK
- **Canadian 55+ Senior Games** – Aug. 23-26, 2022 - Kamloops, BC
- **World Masters Athletics Indoor Championships** - March 27 - April 3, 2023 - Edmonton, AB