About A Simple Benchmark Test For Monitoring Running-Performance Status

This article describes a simple and accurate test to monitor your current, relative performance status.

It accurately shows if your training program is working as intended or if you are over-training, which can lead to over-train syndrome. The test can be done near your home and it doesn't require a calibrated track, as does the $vVO2_{max}$ test. However, it does not provide a quantitative value as does the vVO2max test which can be used to accurately predict race performance. [*For those not familiar with $vVO2_{max}$ based training see [Running Performance Improvement Workouts](#).*] Essentially, this test is based on the full $vVO2_{max}$ test.

The test is applicable for both the $vVO2_{max}$-based and brute-force based training paradigms. [Regarding brute-force training: Historically, runners trained for performance improvement mainly by brute-force {Intervals all out until fatigue stopped them, powered up hills and increasing distance long runs, longer runs as fast as possible per week}].

For this test it is recommended, but not required, that you run a formal $vVO2_{max}$ test to determine if you are currently close to your best vVO2max. See [Using Your vVO2max for Interval Training](#) for a description of the test.

Here is the test:
- You will need a chronograph watch to accurately time exactly 3:00 and 6:00 minutes.
- Select a convenient out-and-back coarse, preferably relatively flat, and where you run freely outbound for at least 3+minutes.
- Select a permanent starting point and mark it if necessary. You will always run your tests starting at this exact point.

- Warm up by jogging slowly, very slowing for 5 minutes. Recover for 2 minutes.

- Then do: 4×100m intervals at about 120% of your vVO2max pace or 90% of your max sprint speed. Important: Allow 60sec recovery between intervals.
- Recover for 2minutes. Now you are ready to go. Notice: You've exercised both your aerobic and anaerobic running systems.
- The goal will be to see how far you can run in exactly 6:00 minutes.
- Run outbound for exactly 3:00 minutes and turn around and run back towards your starting point. Do NOT pause.
- On the return, focus on running so hard you'll actually get beyond your string point at actually 6:00 minutes.
- Mark your 6min stopping point carefully.
- Estimate the distance where you stopped relative to the starting point, in meters.
- The key is to get into a routine of running the test every week or two. This way, you'll be able to see a pattern of change.

Interpreting your results:
- Farther is good if you are training to improve your race times.
- If the distance is essentially the same or is slightly declining for several tests and you are training to improve your performance, <u>your training program is not working.</u> [*If you are "brute-force" training, consider using the vVO2max training paradigm instead.*]
- Shorter is not good, especially if the rate of change is rather rapid. It may be an indication you are into over-train syndrome. Read [About Resting Days For Runners](#)

If you have initially or recently established your VVO2max distance, then you can simply add or subtract your distance change value as if you had done the actual vVO2max test on the track. Use your vVO2max Conversion Chart, etc.

If you are not using the vVO2max-based method, then just estimate or you use a GPS watch, etc. to determine a 6:00min distance. It doesn't need to be very accurate. Then simply compute the percent change from the test distance change / course distance. e.g., 50m/1600m = 3% Given a 50:00 10K before, then a 3% improvement yields 48:30.

Comments, errors, and questions are always welcome. Free free to disseminate.

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