

Tempo Training

This 15 week training cycle introduces tempo training into the training program. Tempo training is a continuous, high volume paddling session with a buildup in the middle to near race pace intensity. An example of one hour tempo paddle would begin with 15 minutes of easy paddling, build up to 35-40 minutes near the middle and finish with 5-10 minutes of easy paddling. The pace build up should be gradual and controlled, not sudden, with peak speed coming 2/3 into the workout.

Tempo training intensity is below lactate threshold heart rate and well below your sprinting heart rate but is hard enough that you are uncomfortable, like a slow drain of your energy. You will experience the tempo workouts get more difficult the longer time you spend at tempo intensity. Many athletes feel fine during the first 15 minutes but slowly it takes greater effort to maintain the desired tempo intensity and the last 15-30 minutes can be down right tough.

Tempo training yields the greatest results when training volume is very large. The key to tempo training is understanding that you need a large amount of training at the tempo intensity in order to expect positive returns. It is this huge volume of training at sub-threshold intensity that will provide the best results. Also, beware that this form of training can easily lead to overtraining. Too much tempo training with too little recovery can lead to fatigue and overtraining symptoms. Since the training intensity feels more like a "slow drain" of energy and not the white-hot intensity of training at lactate threshold or greater, tempo workouts tend to sneak-up on you if you don't allow for proper recovery.

Strategically placing tempo workouts into your training program has many advantages. Here what to expect.

- Better fuel utilization during long races.
- Increased workload capacity for more intense forms of training.
- Increased power output at moderate paddling intensities.
- Increased structures within the muscle cells that produce energy.
- Improved aerobic capacity and efficiency.
- Increase in anaerobic threshold without build up of lactic acid.
- Increase in the bodies' ability to tolerate greater levels of lactate and in the ability to remove lactate.

Tempo workouts will make you feel strong enough to mash the paddle all day like a diesel engine, but expect to be short on speed, acceleration and peak power. To balance this out, days between tempo sessions will involve workouts to emphasize higher speed, stroke cadence and fluidness. As in the previous training cycle, if you apply yourself at 3 practices a week, utilize the appropriate intensity, allow yourself enough rest and eat right, you will be a faster paddle by the end of the cycle. If you participate in two practices a week, you can maintain your current fitness level and learn a little about how to best use your speed and endurance during a race.