

Training Essentials for Ultrarunning

by Jason Koop with Jim Rutberg

A book review by Doug Morris



About mid-way through the book we learn guidelines in how much time should be allocated to training based on length of planned races. This is so important all readers would benefit knowing this much earlier than at the end of Chapter 7. Likewise, information about entering specific race lotteries months before race day, based on your passion of race types should be near the front of the book instead at the start of Chapter 8. Being able to create specialized training early on with individualized workouts, with direct alignment to your passions at races that you got accepted in would be more meaningful.

Training Essentials contains useful training and racing information. “Training is not a one-size-fits-all product. All parts of your program must be personalized.... you need a systematic approach to training (that) integrates all the crucial components: overload and recovery, progression, individuality, and specificity”. Focusing on one while ignoring the others will take you off course.

For race specific info Mr. Koop explains cardio is the most important attribute followed by the ability to climb and descend effectively on the race course if the runner can prevent being brought down by race fueling and hydration impairment issues. Later in the book he adds the concept that walking the climbs may be the most efficient way to win a race. This is a concept to test and adopt if it works for you.

Not surprising is the dreaded reference to each person’s genetics that establish parameters and physiological limits of a runner’s potential. Specifically that VO2 Max is the endurance athlete’s lottery winning ticket or limiter. However, many runners and athletes know they do not have to play to win at participating in the sport of their choice for a lifetime of fulfillment.

Another concept, Mr. Koop’s Endurance String Theory, is really good. Best to read the book than summarize here for full concept. The author also shares in scientific terms how blisters are created. A great deal of friction that does not really need to be known other than how to prevent it.

The book includes great examples of workouts that will benefit any reader to get aligned with race distances and goals. And of course, these should be individually tailored to meet your personalized needs. Likewise, there is detailed info in how the human body processes calories, salts, and whatnot under different conditions. Both interesting to learn and useful to adopt for best performance outcomes.

Strangely there is a bit of coaching elitism in the book when the author writes about the importance of 0.5%, or 12 minutes, of training being the difference between making the podium or watching others earn the spot. Too simple of a statement in today’s world of quickly changing technology, running equipment/clothing, medical, and specific race day conditions. Further

complicating his position statement is his association with CTS who's founder played a significant role in doping allocations in a number of high profile cycling race tours in France across a couple of decades. However, Mr. Koop rightly states that, "Athletes will not care how much you know until they know how much you care". A modified statement would fit appropriately with marriage, work, and friendship relationships.

Mr. Koop brings in testimonials from some of the runners he coaches. This supports his successes as a coach. Though the testimonial in the very first chapter, reads as much more like an info commercial instead of establishing credibility of his coaching methodology. The latter approach would much better engage a reader early on to learn from the book, then he should seek being a potential personal coach to elite readers.

The book wraps up with three sections of quotes and narrative from runners and coaches, a guide to North America based ultra-races, and lots of references to further reading. A silent offering of a call to action for action oriented loners of endurance sports.

The quotes and narratives are exceptional observations that encourage readers to think through what motivates competitors. A reader will benefit from adopting some of the values and training/race tactics of contributors. The multiple summaries of races which include course facts, race specific tips, mental challenges, and more are plenty to build readers' passion to enter race lotteries all over the continent. The book as a whole is comprehensive, stocked full of useful information in a useable format, and motivating to take anyone's race level a few steps higher; Mr. Koop propels readers' interest level higher by providing an extensive list of resources to learn more.

While the book did not start with the best subject early on, it showed that it finished strong in a long and worthwhile offering of useful information to finish a top your self-defined podium in ultrarunning.

Training Essentials for Ultrarunning by Jason Koop with Jim Rutberg is published by Velopress with illustration throughout. This paperback is 7 1/2" x 0" and is 356 pages in length and sells for \$21.95. The foreword is written by Dean Karnazes, who is coached by the author.