



# 12 Weeks Out

*The HYROX race playbook — what I'd focus on if I were racing in the next three months*

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WRITTEN FOR

**First-timers & PB chasers**

RACE

**Any HYROX, 12 weeks out**

COACH

**Dan McCaffrey**

*Built with HYROX Melbourne in mind — 9–13 December 2026, Melbourne Convention & Exhibition Centre*

## The Playbook at a Glance

Everything in this guide on one page

| TOPIC                             | THE SHORT VERSION                                                                                                                                                   | PAGE |
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| <b>The honest read</b>            | Twelve weeks won't build a huge engine from scratch. It is plenty to arrive fit, skilled and calm — or to take real time off a PB if you train your actual limiter. | 2    |
| <b>The Cardiac Pyramid</b>        | Easy aerobic volume makes your pyramid <b>wider</b> . Threshold and hard intervals make it <b>taller</b> . Wide first, then tall.                                   | 5    |
| <b>Five training pillars</b>      | Aerobic base · threshold · strength · compromised running · station skill.                                                                                          | 7    |
| <b>The 12-week block</b>          | Foundation <b>wk 1–4</b> · Build <b>wk 5–8</b> · Sharpen <b>wk 9–10</b> · Taper <b>wk 11–12</b> .                                                                   | 8    |
| <b>Track A — First HYROX</b>      | <b>4–5</b> sessions a week. Goal: finish strong, no penalties, no drama.                                                                                            | 9    |
| <b>Track B — Chasing a PB</b>     | <b>6–7</b> sessions a week. Goal: find your limiter in your splits and train it.                                                                                    | 10   |
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| <b>Nutrition &amp; fuelling</b>   | Performance first. Fuel the work, protect recovery, and only run a small deficit on lighter days.                                                                   | 16   |
| <b>Taper &amp; race day</b>       | Cut volume, keep intensity, rehearse the morning, know the rules.                                                                                                   | 18   |

### Who this is for

You've entered a HYROX roughly three months from now. Either it's your first and you want to finish it properly, or you've raced before and you know there's time left out on the course. Everything from the Cardiac Pyramid to the taper applies to both of you. Where the advice splits, you'll see **Track A** (first HYROX) and **Track B** (chasing a PB).

### How to use it

Read it once end to end. Then go back to your track, build your week from the sample, and keep the station and race-day pages handy for the last month. This isn't a day-by-day plan — it's how I think about the block, so you understand *why* each session is there. People follow what they understand. And if you'd rather have it built around you, that's on the last page.

#### THE HONEST READ

Most people who underperform at HYROX don't lack fitness. They go out too fast, pick up no-reps, walk the last three runs, or arrive under-fuelled and over-cooked. A lot of your result is decided by things that cost nothing but attention.

## Why I Wrote This

Five races, one solo lesson, and a year out injured

I'm Dan — founder and coach at Second Wind Collective. Before coaching I spent four years as a school teacher, and that's still how I coach: I want you to understand why you're doing something, not just be told to do it.

My own HYROX story is the reason this guide leans so hard on the aerobic base.

| RACE                 | DIVISION     | TIME    | WHAT IT TAUGHT ME                                                                                              |
|----------------------|--------------|---------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Melbourne · Dec 2024 | Open doubles | 1:11    | My first HYROX.                                                                                                |
| Brisbane · Mar 2025  | Open singles | 1:21:23 | My first solo. 20 wall ball no-reps and a calf that went on the sleds. The engine wasn't there for 8 km alone. |
| Perth · Sep 2025     | Doubles      | 1:04:02 | A year of speed and strength work paying off.                                                                  |
| Singapore · Nov 2025 | Pro doubles  | 1:02:44 | 20th overall, 6th in age group, in a stacked field. Proof the principles work.                                 |
| Melbourne · Dec 2025 | Pro doubles  | 1:06:28 | Back in Melbourne at Pro loads.                                                                                |

Through 2025 I went hard at speed work and strength so I could move into the Pro category. It worked brilliantly in doubles, where you get to recover while your partner works. But I didn't do enough easy aerobic work for a solo race — and a solo race finds that out by run five.

Then came a full year of injuries. I'm now building back toward HYROX Melbourne in December 2026 as a solo racer, using exactly the principles in this guide: tissue capacity first, a wide aerobic base, strength that serves the race, and the hard work layered on top. I'm not asking you to do anything I'm not doing myself.

**The lesson in one line:** speed and strength make you fast for a kilometre. The aerobic base is what lets you be fast for the eighth one.

# What You're Actually Training For

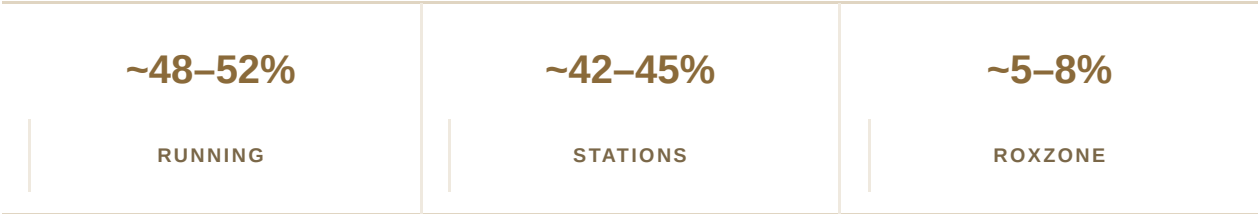
8 × 1 km of running, each followed by one workout station

| # | STATION           | WORK              | OPEN WOMEN   | OPEN MEN · PRO WOMEN | PRO MEN      |
|---|-------------------|-------------------|--------------|----------------------|--------------|
| 1 | SkiErg            | 1,000 m           | —            | —                    | —            |
| 2 | Sled push         | 50 m (4 × 12.5 m) | 102 kg       | 152 kg               | 202 kg       |
| 3 | Sled pull         | 50 m (4 × 12.5 m) | 78 kg        | 103 kg               | 153 kg       |
| 4 | Burpee broad jump | 80 m              | —            | —                    | —            |
| 5 | Row               | 1,000 m           | —            | —                    | —            |
| 6 | Farmers carry     | 200 m             | 2 × 16 kg    | 2 × 24 kg            | 2 × 32 kg    |
| 7 | Sandbag lunges    | 100 m             | 10 kg        | 20 kg                | 30 kg        |
| 8 | Wall balls        | 100 reps          | 4 kg · 2.7 m | 6 kg · 3.0 m         | 9 kg · 3.0 m |

Sled weights include the sled. Loads from the official HYROX 26/27 singles rulebook — always check the current rulebook for your event. Mixed doubles race at Open men's loads.

## Where your time goes

Race data from hundreds of thousands of finishes tells the same story every season: roughly **half** your race is running, a bit under half is stations, and the rest is the Roxzone — the transition area where you enter and leave each station.



### What the averages look like

Average finish times sit around **1:35** for Open men and **1:50** for Open women. Top-quarter finishers are roughly **1:15–1:25** (men) and **1:26–1:38** (women).

### Where average and elite split apart

The biggest gaps aren't on the ergs. They're on **wall balls**, the **sled pull** and **burpee broad jumps** — each worth **2–3+ minutes** between an average and an elite male finisher.

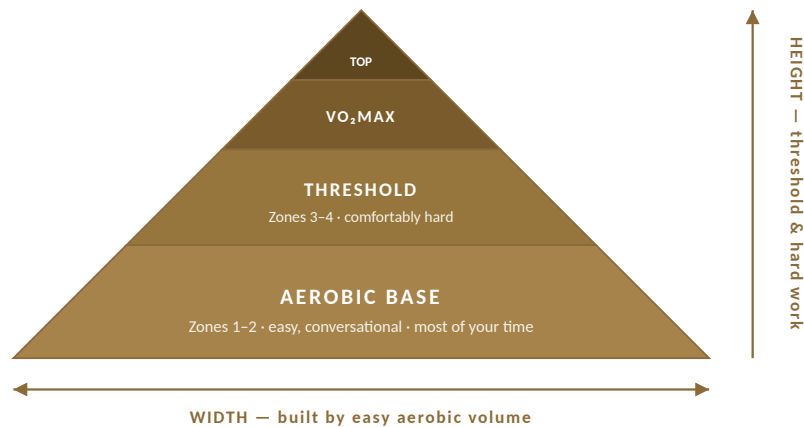
#### WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOUR TRAINING

HYROX is an endurance race with strength interruptions, not a strength test with some running. Your running and aerobic engine carry half the clock and decide how well you handle the other half. That's why the next section is about building the engine.

## The Cardiac Pyramid

Build it wide, then build it tall

Picture your fitness as a pyramid. The bigger it is, the more work your heart and muscles can do — and the longer you can keep doing it.



### Width: the aerobic base

Your heart's output is simple maths: **cardiac output = heart rate × stroke volume** (the blood pumped per beat). Your maximum heart rate is largely set by genetics and age — training barely moves it. What training *does* change is stroke volume. Consistent easy aerobic work enlarges the heart's main pumping chamber and increases blood plasma volume, so every beat moves more blood. In the muscles you build more capillaries and mitochondria, so more of that oxygen actually gets used. The result: the same pace costs you less, you clear fatigue faster between stations, and you recover better between sessions. That's width.

### Height: threshold and high intensity

Threshold work raises the pace you can hold before fatigue snowballs — the effort you'll spend most of a HYROX close to. Harder VO<sub>2</sub>max intervals lift your ceiling. That's height: how much of your engine you can use, and how fast you can go when it counts.

### Why wide comes first

A pyramid can only go as high as its base will support. Stack hard session on hard session on a narrow base and you get a tall, unstable pyramid: quick for a few kilometres, then a fade, a niggle or burnout. A wide base lets you absorb more hard work, recover from it, and hold your pace to run eight.



#### THE RULE THAT FOLLOWS

Around **75–80%** of your conditioning time should be genuinely easy. It feels too slow. It isn't. Easy days easy is what makes the hard days hard.

## Speaking the Same Language: Effort Zones

No lab test needed — effort and the talk test work

| ZONE                         | RPE        | TALK TEST                               | WHAT IT BUILDS                                            | IN HYROX                      |
|------------------------------|------------|-----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <b>1–2 · Easy</b>            | <b>2–4</b> | Full sentences, nose-breathing possible | Width: stroke volume, capillaries, mitochondria, recovery | Most of your week             |
| <b>3 · Steady</b>            | <b>5–6</b> | Short sentences                         | Aerobic strength, race rhythm                             | Longer hybrid sessions        |
| <b>4 · Threshold</b>         | <b>7–8</b> | A few words at a time                   | Height: the pace you can hold before it falls apart       | Race pace for most people     |
| <b>5 · VO<sub>2</sub>max</b> | <b>9</b>   | Single words                            | Height: your ceiling                                      | Small doses, PB track         |
| <b>Anaerobic</b>             | <b>10</b>  | None                                    | Top-end power                                             | Last wall balls, final sprint |

RPE = rate of perceived exertion, 1–10. If you use heart rate, Zone 2 is roughly the top of “can still hold a conversation”.

### Threshold, in plain terms

Threshold pace is roughly what you could hold for **45–60 minutes** flat out in a race. For many people that’s somewhere between their 10 km and half-marathon race pace. Threshold sessions break that effort into chunks with short rests, so you can spend more total time there than you could in one go.

### Compromised running

This is running on legs that have just done a station. Your fresh 1 km pace means very little if it falls apart after 50 m of sled push. Compromised sessions teach your legs, lungs and head to settle into race pace while everything is shouting at you to stop.

**And easy means easy.** The most common mistake I see is every session drifting into Zone 3 — too hard to build the base, too easy to build height.

### Built around your life

The best plan is the one you can repeat for twelve weeks around a job, family and a social life.

- **Protect the key sessions.** If the week falls apart, keep one strength session, one threshold session and one easy aerobic session. That’s your minimum effective week.
- **Don’t make up missed sessions.** Pick up where you are. Doubling up is how people get hurt.
- **Sleep is training.** Aim for **7–9 hours**. It’s where the adaptation actually happens.
- **Niggles get modified, not ignored.** Swap a run for the bike or rower and tell your coach. I lost a year by pushing through. Don’t.
- **Build running gradually.** Hold your run volume steady every third or fourth week, and let the ergs and bike carry extra aerobic work without the pounding.

## The Five Training Pillars

Every session in the block serves one of these

### 1 Aerobic base

*Widens the pyramid. Carries half your race clock and all of your recovery.*

- **Easy runs** of **30–60 min** at RPE 3–4.
- **Ergs and bike** (row, ski, spin) for extra aerobic volume without the impact of more running.
- **One longer session** a week of **60–90 min** — a run, or a run/erg mix. Keep it conversational.

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### 2 Threshold (lactate) work

*Builds height. Raises the pace you can hold for an hour-plus — which is basically HYROX.*

- **Runs:** **5–6 × 1 km** at threshold with **60–90 s** rest · or **3 × 8 min** with 2 min easy.
- **Ergs:** **4 × 2,000 m** row or **8 × 1 km** alternating ski and row, tempo effort.
- **Harder VO<sub>2</sub>max work** (**6 × 3 min** hard, 2 min easy) in small doses — mostly for Track B.

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### 3 Strength

*Makes race loads feel lighter, so each station costs a smaller share of your engine. Also your best injury insurance.*

- **Squat** (back, front, goblet or hack squat) · **hinge** (Romanian or trap-bar deadlift) · **single leg** (split squats, walking lunges, step-ups).
- **Pull** (rows, pull-ups, hand-over-hand rope pulls) · **push** (heavy sled or leg drive, a press) · **carry** (farmers, suitcase, front-rack).
- **Calves, trunk and grip** — the unglamorous bits that go first late in the race.
- Leave **1–3 reps in reserve** (RPE 7–8). Strength serves the race: grinding to failure costs you the next day's run.

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### 4 Compromised running

*Teaches you to run race pace on tired legs — the single most HYROX-specific skill.*

- **Example:** **4 rounds** of 1 km at goal race pace, straight into one station at race load (e.g. 50 m lunges or 25 wall balls), 2 min easy.
- Rotate the stations. Pay most attention to how the first **200 m** of each run feels — that's where race time leaks.

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### 5 Station skill

*Free time. Good technique and knowing the standards costs no fitness at all.*

- Practise every station at race standard, at least weekly in the first month. Film your wall balls and lunges.
- Then practise them tired. Technique that only exists when you're fresh doesn't exist on race day.

## The 12-Week Block

Four phases, working backwards from race day

| PHASE                                  | FOCUS                                                 | KEY SESSIONS                                                                                                           | VOLUME                                                |
|----------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Foundation</b><br>Weeks 1–4         | Widen the base. Heavier strength. Learn the stations. | Easy aerobic volume · 1 threshold session · strength at <b>4–6 reps</b> · station technique                            | Build steadily; ease off in week <b>4</b>             |
| <b>Build</b><br>Weeks 5–8              | Add height. Make it HYROX-specific.                   | 1–2 threshold sessions · weekly compromised running · strength moves to <b>6–10 reps</b> and station-specific circuits | Highest weeks of the block; ease off in week <b>8</b> |
| <b>Sharpen</b><br>Weeks 9–10           | Race rehearsal.                                       | Race-pace running · half simulation (4 runs + 4 stations) · strength maintained at lower volume                        | Hold volume; quality up                               |
| <b>Taper &amp; race</b><br>Weeks 11–12 | Arrive fresh without losing sharpness.                | Shorter threshold and race-pace touches · last heavy strength <b>~10 days</b> out                                      | Cut <b>40–60%</b> progressively                       |

“Ease off” weeks drop volume by roughly a third and keep a little intensity. They’re where the previous three weeks get absorbed — don’t skip them.

### Why no full race simulation?

A full race at race effort takes most people a week or more to recover from, and it tells you little that a half simulation and good compromised sessions don’t. Race day is the full simulation. Save it.

### Racing HYROX Melbourne in December?

Here’s the block mapped to a race weekend of **12–13 December 2026**. If your wave is midweek, slide everything a few days earlier.

| PHASE                              | DATES                                                                                                |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Lead-in week                       | Mon 14 – Sun 20 September — if you’re starting now, use it to test your paces and learn the stations |
| <b>Foundation</b> · wk 1–4         | Mon 21 September – Sun 18 October                                                                    |
| <b>Build</b> · wk 5–8              | Mon 19 October – Sun 15 November                                                                     |
| <b>Sharpen</b> · wk 9–10           | Mon 16 – Sun 29 November                                                                             |
| <b>Taper &amp; race</b> · wk 11–12 | Mon 30 November – race weekend, Melbourne Convention & Exhibition Centre                             |

#### BEFORE WEEK 1: GET YOUR BASELINE

Run a **5 km** time trial (or a hard 3 km) so your threshold and race paces come from real numbers. If you’ve raced before, pull up your last result and your splits — Track B shows you what to look for.

## Your First HYROX

Finish strong, stay penalty-free, and enjoy it enough to want another

For your first race the goal isn't a time. It's arriving at run eight still running, with every station done to standard.

### Your priorities, in order

- 1. Running durability and aerobic base.** Get comfortable running regularly. Most of your improvement lives here.
- 2. Learn the stations and the standards.** Know exactly what a good rep looks like, so you don't lose minutes to no-reps and penalties.
- 3. Build basic strength.** Two sessions a week covering legs, pulling, carrying and trunk.
- 4. One threshold session a week.** Enough height without compromising the base.
- 5. One half simulation** in week 9 or 10, so nothing on race day is new.

### Sample week — Build phase · 4–5 sessions

| DAY | SESSION               | DETAIL                                                                                                                              | EFFORT  |
|-----|-----------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|
| Mon | Strength A + stations | Squat, Romanian deadlift, split squat, rows, farmers carry · then 15 min technique: sled push, wall balls · 60 min                  | RPE 7   |
| Tue | Easy run              | <b>30–40 min</b> conversational · bike or row if legs need a break                                                                  | RPE 3–4 |
| Wed | Rest                  | Walk, mobility, life                                                                                                                | —       |
| Thu | Threshold             | 10 min easy · <b>5 × 800 m–1 km</b> at threshold, <b>90 s</b> walk/jog · 10 min easy                                                | RPE 7–8 |
| Fri | Rest                  | Or an easy 20–30 min spin                                                                                                           | —       |
| Sat | Hybrid aerobic        | <b>60 min:</b> 3–4 rounds of 1 km run + 500 m row or ski + 1 light station, continuous · one week in Sharpen, this is your half sim | RPE 5–6 |
| Sun | Optional 5th          | Strength B (pull, press, lunges, carries, trunk) · or <b>30–45 min</b> easy erg                                                     | RPE 3–7 |

### First-timer mistakes I see every event

- **Going out too fast.** Adrenaline, music, a crowd. Run 1 and the SkiErg feel easy — and cost you runs 5 to 8.
- **Emptying the tank on the sled push.** It's station two. You have six more.
- **Wall ball no-reps.** Standards don't relax at rep 80.
- **Never having practised burpee broad jumps.** 80 m is a long way to learn a rhythm.
- **Losing count of laps.** A missed run lap is a penalty of several minutes. Know the layout before you start.
- **Anything new on race day.** Shoes, gels, breakfast, caffeine.

## Chasing a PB

Your last race already told you what to train — read your splits

If you've raced before, don't just train "more". Pull up your results and find where the time actually went. Then spend the block on that.

### Diagnose your limiter

| YOUR SPLITS SHOW...                                | WHAT IT USUALLY MEANS                           | WHERE TO PUT THE WORK                                                                   |
|----------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Runs 6–8 are <b>30+ s/km</b> slower than runs 1–2  | The base ran out. Or you went out too fast.     | More easy aerobic volume, compromised running, and a stricter pacing plan for runs 1–3. |
| Fast ergs, then a slow run 2 or run 6              | You over-cooked the SkiErg or row.              | Race the ergs at threshold, not max. Practise erg-to-run transitions.                   |
| Slow sled push or pull vs. others in your division | Strength or technique — usually both.           | Heavy sled work, leg and pulling strength, footwork on carpet.                          |
| Wall balls over <b>8 min</b> , or no-reps          | Leg endurance, set strategy, or standards.      | Wall balls after running, planned sets, film your depth.                                |
| Burpee broad jumps well behind your runs           | Rhythm and efficiency, not fitness.             | Weekly BBJ practice for smooth, repeatable reps.                                        |
| Roxzone over <b>7–8 min</b> in total               | Walking transitions, confusion over the layout. | Jog every transition. Learn the layout. This is the cheapest time in the race.          |

### Your priorities

- **More threshold, done properly.** One to two sessions a week, controlled — the goal is time at threshold, not heroic efforts.
- **More running volume**, built gradually, with the ergs and bike carrying extra aerobic work.
- **Weekly compromised running** at goal race pace from week 5.
- **Strength-endurance** for the stations that cost you most — heavy early, then repeatable under fatigue.
- **Considering Pro?** Train at Pro loads once Open weights stop being what limits you. Keep racing Open until your stations are quick relative to your runs.

## Sample week — Build phase · 6–7 sessions

| DAY | SESSION                          | DETAIL                                                                                                | EFFORT      |
|-----|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| Mon | Lower strength                   | Squat or hack squat, trap-bar deadlift, split squat, hamstring curl, calves, heavy sled push · 60 min | RPE 7–8     |
| Tue | Threshold run                    | 15 min easy · <b>5–6 × 1 km</b> at threshold, <b>60–90 s</b> rest · 10 min easy                       | RPE 7–8     |
| Wed | AM Upper strength<br>PM Easy run | Pull-ups, rows, press, sled pull, carries, trunk · then <b>40–50 min</b> easy run later in the day    | RPE 7 · 3–4 |
| Thu | Compromised running              | <b>4–5 rounds</b> : 1 km at goal race pace + 1 station at race load (rotate) · 2 min easy between     | RPE 7–8     |
| Fri | Rest                             | Or 20–30 min very easy spin                                                                           | —           |
| Sat | Long aerobic                     | <b>75–90 min</b> run, or run/erg mix · conversational throughout                                      | RPE 3–4     |
| Sun | Optional 7th                     | <b>6 × 3 min</b> hard / 2 min easy on ski or row · or <b>30–45 min</b> easy erg · or rest             | RPE 3–9     |

Keep the day after a hard session easy. Never stack the threshold run, compromised session and VO<sub>2</sub>max work on back-to-back days.

### THE HONEST READ ON PBS

Big chunks of time usually come from one of two places: runners who are losing minutes on stations, or strong people whose running collapses late. Find which one you are. Training your strengths feels great and changes very little.

## Checkpoints through the block

| WHEN          | CHECK                                                                                      | IF YOU'RE BEHIND                                          |
|---------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| End of week 4 | Re-run your <b>5 km</b> or 3 km test. Easy pace should feel easier at the same effort.     | Normal early on. Keep easy days easy and stay the course. |
| End of week 8 | Hold goal race pace for all rounds of your compromised session with stations at race load. | Adjust the target pace, not the training volume.          |
| Week 9–10     | Half simulation within about <b>5%</b> of your target splits, with even runs.              | Re-set your pacing plan around what you actually ran.     |
| Race week     | Fresh, sleeping well, legs bouncing on the strides.                                        | Rest more. Nothing you do now adds fitness.               |

## Nailing the Eight Stations

Technique cues, how to race each one, and the penalty traps

Stations reward technique and punish ego. For each one: how to move well, how hard to go, and what the judges are watching for. Rules summarised from the HYROX 26/27 rulebook — read the current version before your race.

### 01 SkiErg · 1,000 m

Same for all divisions

#### CUES

- Arms long overhead, then drive down with your lats and a hip hinge — not just your arms.
- Finish hands past your hips, then let the handles pull you tall.
- Long, powerful strokes beat fast, short ones.

#### RACE IT

Threshold effort, around RPE 7. You should be able to run straight out of it. Overcook it and you pay for it on every run after.

#### TRAIN IT

Ski intervals and ski-to-run transitions.

#### PENALTY TRAP

Feet must stay on the footplate area.

### 02 Sled push · 50 m

Open W 102 · Open M / Pro W 152 · Pro M 202 kg

#### CUES

- Low body angle, arms long and locked, hands on the upright poles.
- Short, quick steps driving through the balls of your feet.
- Keep it moving. Getting a stopped sled going again is the most expensive part.

#### RACE IT

Steady and continuous at RPE 7–8. Only rest, if you must, at the end of a 12.5 m length — not in the middle.

#### TRAIN IT

Heavy sled pushes, squats and split squats, calf strength.

#### PENALTY TRAP

You and the sled start fully inside your box and stay in your lane.

### 03 Sled pull · 50 m

Open W 78 · Open M / Pro W 103 · Pro M 153 kg

#### CUES

- Sit into an athletic stance and use your legs and body weight, not just your arms.
- Long hand-over-hand pulls. Step back as you pull to add body weight.
- Keep the rope tidy behind you so you don't trip or tangle.

#### RACE IT

Rhythm over rage. Grip goes fast here and you still need it for the farmers carry.

#### TRAIN IT

Rope pulls, heavy rows, grip work, backward drags.

#### PENALTY TRAP

Stay standing (no sitting or kneeling), stay in your working area, keep the sled and rope in your lane.

### 04 Burpee broad jump · 80 m

Same for all divisions

#### CUES

- Drop straight down: hands behind your feet, chest to the floor.
- Jump a modest, repeatable distance. Giant jumps cost more than they save.
- Land soft and go straight into the next rep. Rhythm is everything.

#### RACE IT

Find a pace you could hold for all 80 m on the first rep. Breathe on the way down.

#### TRAIN IT

Weekly sets of 20–40 m, including after runs.

#### PENALTY TRAP

Chest (nipple line) clearly touches the ground. Both feet take off and land together — no extra steps or shuffles. **15 s** per infringement.

## 05 Row · 1,000 m

Same for all divisions

### CUES

- Legs, then body, then arms on the drive. Arms, body, legs on the way back.
- Push the floor away. The power comes from your legs.
- Powerful strokes at a controlled rate, not a frantic one.

### RACE IT

Threshold, not max. The farmers, lunges and wall balls are still to come.

### TRAIN IT

Row intervals and row-to-run transitions.

### PENALTY TRAP

Feet stay on the footplates.

## 06 Farmers carry · 200 m

Open W 2×16 · Open M / Pro W 2×24 · Pro M 2×32 kg

### CUES

- Crush the handles, shoulders back and down, tall posture.
- Quick, short steps. Jog it if your grip allows.
- This is where runners make up time. Don't walk it slowly.

### RACE IT

Keep moving. If you need to put them down, do it once, briefly.

### TRAIN IT

Heavy carries, grip work, carries straight into runs.

### PENALTY TRAP

Arms by your sides. Kettlebells can't move forward while down. Return them upright to the right spot or take **30 s**.

## 07 Sandbag lunges · 100 m

Open W 10 · Open M / Pro W 20 · Pro M 30 kg

### CUES

- Bag high on your upper back and shoulders, elbows tucked, chest up.
- Back knee kisses the floor, then drive up through the front heel to fully tall.
- A slow, unbroken rhythm beats fast sets with stops.

### RACE IT

RPE 7–8. The legs you save here are the ones doing your wall balls.

### TRAIN IT

Walking lunges for distance, especially after runs.

### PENALTY TRAP

Knee clearly touches every rep, hips and knees fully extended at the top, alternating legs. The bag stays supported — dropping it costs **15 s**.

## 08 Wall balls · 100 reps

Open W 4 kg to 2.7 m · Open M / Pro W 6 kg to 3 m · Pro M 9 kg to 3 m

### CUES

- Catch high, ride the ball down into your squat, and drive up with your hips.
- Aim for the centre of the target, not above it.
- Break *before* failure. Short planned rests beat long forced ones.

### RACE IT

**Track A:** sets of **10** with a few breaths between. **Track B:** bigger opening sets (**20–25**), then shrink them as needed. This is the station where you empty the tank.

### PENALTY TRAP

Hips below knees every rep, and the ball must hit the target. No warnings: it's a rep or a no-rep. I took **20** no-reps in my first solo.

### NO SLED? NO SKIERG? SUBSTITUTES THAT WORK

|            |                                                                                                                    |
|------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Sled push  | Unpowered treadmill push · heavy leg press + walking lunges                                                        |
| Sled pull  | Hand-over-hand rope pulls on a cable · heavy rows · backward drags                                                 |
| SkiErg     | Row or air bike for the engine · straight-arm cable pulldowns                                                      |
| Wall balls | Dumbbell thrusters · med ball to any safe high target                                                              |
| Lunges     | Walking lunges with a barbell, dumbbells or weight vest · <i>get on the real sleds a few times before race day</i> |

## Solo vs Doubles

Same 8 km of running — a very different race

|               | SOLO                                                 | DOUBLES                                                                                         |
|---------------|------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Running       | All <b>8 km</b> , alone, at your pace.               | All <b>8 km</b> , together. Run ahead of your partner and it's a <b>1 min</b> penalty.          |
| Stations      | All of it, all you.                                  | Split the work however you like, but only one works at a time. You enter each station together. |
| Loads         | Your division.                                       | Same as singles for your division. Mixed doubles use Open men's loads.                          |
| What it tests | Aerobic durability and pacing discipline.            | Repeated hard bursts, teamwork, and running at the slower partner's pace.                       |
| Train more    | Easy volume, threshold, compromised running, pacing. | Harder station intervals, sharper running speed, practice together.                             |

### Racing solo

- Nobody to slow you down on run 1. You have to do it yourself.
- The aerobic base matters more than anything else. Doubles hides a narrow pyramid. Solo exposes it.
- Your plan has to cover every station — there are no breaks.

### Racing doubles

- Agree your split for every station *before* race day, e.g. swap every 12.5 m length on the sleds, every 10–20 wall balls.
- Give more station work to whoever is stronger at that station, and pace the runs to the slower runner.
- Train together at least **3–4** times, including one half simulation.
- Because you get rest, you can go harder on each turn. That's where speed work pays off.

**From experience:** the speed and strength focus that got me **1:02:44** in Pro doubles was exactly what left me short in my solo. If you're moving from doubles to solo, your biggest job this block is widening the base.

Relay isn't covered here — it's a shorter, different event. This guide is for people racing the full course.

## Pacing & Target Splits

A plan for every run and station, so your head doesn't make it up on the day

| TARGET FINISH         | 1:45    | 1:30    | 1:20    | 1:10    |
|-----------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Average run pace      | 6:00/km | 5:15/km | 4:45/km | 4:15/km |
| 8 runs total          | 48:00   | 42:00   | 38:00   | 34:00   |
| 1 · SkiErg            | 5:15    | 4:45    | 4:30    | 4:15    |
| 2 · Sled push         | 4:30    | 3:45    | 3:15    | 2:45    |
| 3 · Sled pull         | 6:00    | 5:00    | 4:45    | 3:45    |
| 4 · Burpee broad jump | 7:00    | 6:15    | 5:15    | 4:15    |
| 5 · Row               | 5:15    | 4:50    | 4:35    | 4:20    |
| 6 · Farmers carry     | 2:45    | 2:15    | 2:00    | 1:45    |
| 7 · Sandbag lunges    | 6:30    | 5:15    | 4:30    | 4:00    |
| 8 · Wall balls        | 10:45   | 8:55    | 7:10    | 5:55    |
| Stations total        | 48:00   | 41:00   | 36:00   | 31:00   |
| Roxzone total         | 9:00    | 7:00    | 6:00    | 5:00    |
| Finish                | 1:45:00 | 1:30:00 | 1:20:00 | 1:10:00 |

Illustrative splits using Open men's loads as the reference. Women's and Pro station times will differ, and venue layouts change Roxzone time, but the shape holds. Use them as a starting point and adjust to your own strengths.

### Six pacing rules

1. **Run 1 should feel easy.** At or slightly slower than your target average. If you can't say a short sentence, slow down.

2. **Ergs at threshold, not max.** Nobody wins HYROX on the SkiErg.

3. **Stations at RPE 7–8** until the lunges. Wall balls are where you empty the tank.
4. **Jog every Roxzone transition.** It's the cheapest time on the course.

5. **Know your laps** before the gun. Missing one costs minutes.

6. **Judge your race by the gap** between your fastest and slowest run. Smaller is better.

#### SETTING YOUR OWN TARGET

Your goal run pace is the pace you can hold through your compromised sessions by week 8 — not your fresh 1 km time. Build the rest of your plan around that number.

## Fuelling the Block

You're training for a performance goal — eat like it

For the next twelve weeks, food is fuel for the work and material for recovery. You can't adapt to training you haven't fuelled.

**Daily targets** · from sports nutrition consensus guidelines (ACSM) — a starting point, not a prescription

| NUTRIENT · DAY TYPE               | PER KG BODYWEIGHT | EXAMPLE: 75 KG | NOTES                                              |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------|----------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| Protein · every day               | 1.6–2.2 g         | 120–165 g      | 3–5 feeds of ~0.3–0.4 g/kg. Aim high in a deficit. |
| Carbs · rest or strength-only day | 3–5 g             | 225–375 g      | Your lighter days.                                 |
| Carbs · moderate day (~1 hour)    | 5–7 g             | 375–525 g      | Most training days.                                |
| Carbs · big day (1–3 h, doubles)  | 6–10 g            | 450–750 g      | Long sessions, sims, double days.                  |
| Fats                              | Fill the rest     |                | Don't go very low-fat.                             |

### Around your sessions

| WHEN         | WHAT                                                                                              |
|--------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1–4 h before | A normal meal with carbs and some protein. Early session? A small snack: banana, toast and honey. |
| During       | Under ~75 min, water is usually enough. Longer: <b>30–60 g</b> carbs an hour.                     |
| After        | <b>20–40 g</b> protein plus carbs within a couple of hours — sooner on double days.               |
| Fluids       | Start hydrated. After sweaty sessions, <b>1.25–1.5 L</b> per kg lost, plus electrolytes.          |

WANT TO LOSE FAT DURING THE BLOCK TOO?

You can, modestly, as long as it stays the secondary goal:

- **Fuel the key days fully:** threshold, compromised running, the long session and simulations.
- **Run a small deficit on lighter days** — rest and strength-only days — of roughly **300–500 kcal**.
- **Keep protein high** to hold on to muscle.
- **Go slow:** about **0.25–0.5%** of bodyweight a week is plenty.
- **Stop the deficit** for the last **10–14 days**. Taper and race week are fuelled.
- **If performance, sleep or mood drop**, the deficit is too big. The race comes first — the scale will still be there in December.

# Under-fuelling: The Quiet Performance Killer

More training plus less food is a combination that catches plenty of hybrid athletes

When you don't eat enough to cover both your training and your body's basic needs, your body starts cutting back on things that matter: recovery, hormones, immunity, bone health, and eventually performance. Sports medicine calls this **Relative Energy Deficiency in Sport (REDs)**. It isn't just a women's issue. Men get it too, and often miss it because there's no obvious warning sign.

### Signs to watch for

- Tiredness that rest days don't fix; heavy legs all week
- Performance stalling or going backwards despite consistent training
- Poor sleep, irritability, low mood or motivation
- Getting sick often, or niggles that won't heal
- Bone stress injuries
- Low libido; irregular or missed periods

### What to do

- Eat more, starting with carbs around your training.
- Drop any deficit completely until things settle.
- Check your weekly structure has real easy and rest days.
- If several signs hang around for more than a couple of weeks, see your GP or a sports dietitian.

### Race week and race day

| WHEN             | WHAT                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Race week        | Eat normally — volume is lower, but this isn't the week to cut. No deficit.                                                                                                                    |
| Day before       | Push carbs to the higher end of your range (around <b>7 g/kg</b> ) from familiar, lower-fibre foods. You don't need a marathon-style carb load. Drink regularly.                               |
| 2–4 h before     | A breakfast you've tested: roughly <b>1–2 g/kg</b> carbs, a little protein, low fat and fibre. Oats and banana, bagel with jam, rice with eggs.                                                |
| 45–60 min before | Caffeine, only if you've used it in training — a normal coffee or your usual pre-workout dose.                                                                                                 |
| 10–15 min before | Optional small carb hit (half a gel, a few lollies) and a few sips of water.                                                                                                                   |
| During           | Water is available in the Roxzone. Racing <b>75+ min</b> ? A gel around run 4–5 can help. You must carry any nutrition from the start — taking anything from spectators is outside assistance. |
| After            | Protein, carbs, fluids. Then celebrate properly.                                                                                                                                               |

**Nothing new on race day.** Rehearse your race-morning breakfast, timing and caffeine before your half simulation in week 9 or 10.

## Taper & Race Week

The fitness is already built. Now arrive fresh enough to use it

The research on tapering is consistent: a taper of about **two weeks**, cutting training volume by roughly **40–60%** progressively while **keeping intensity and session frequency**, gives the best performance boost. Cut the amount, not the quality.

| WEEK    | VOLUME  | WHAT CHANGES                                                                                                                                                                  |
|---------|---------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Week 11 | –30–40% | Keep one shorter threshold session and one short compromised session. Last heavy strength session around <b>10 days</b> out. Long session shortened to <b>45–60 min</b> easy. |
| Week 12 | –50–60% | Short, sharp race-pace touches. Light strength early in the week only. Lots of sleep, normal food, no new anything.                                                           |

### Sample race week (Saturday race)

| DAY | SESSION                                                                                                                                            |
|-----|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Mon | 30–40 min easy · light full-body strength, nothing near failure                                                                                    |
| Tue | 10 min easy · <b>3 × 1 km</b> at race pace, each followed by a short station touch (10 wall balls, 20 m lunges) · 3 min easy between · 10 min easy |
| Wed | 30 min easy, or rest                                                                                                                               |
| Thu | Rest · mobility · sort your kit                                                                                                                    |
| Fri | <b>15–20 min</b> easy with <b>4 × 20 s</b> strides · carb-focused meals · pack your bag · early night                                              |
| Sat | <b>Race.</b>                                                                                                                                       |

Racing midweek or Sunday? Shift the pattern so the strides session is the day before and the race-pace touch is four days out.

#### TAPER NERVES ARE NORMAL

Legs feel flat, you feel like you’re losing fitness, you want to squeeze in “one more” hard session. Don’t. You can’t gain fitness in the final week, but you can definitely lose freshness.

## Race Day

Rehearse the morning so the race is the only new thing

| TIME TO YOUR WAVE | WHAT TO DO                                                                                                                                                                            |
|-------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 3–4 h             | Up, tested breakfast, fluids. Relaxed start.                                                                                                                                          |
| 60–90 min         | Arrive. Check in, collect your timing chip and put it <b>on your ankle</b> (no chip on your ankle = Did Not Start). Walk the course: run laps, Roxzone entry and exit, station order. |
| 30–45 min         | Warm-up, <b>15–20 min</b> : <b>8–10 min</b> easy jog or erg, dynamic mobility, <b>3–4</b> build-ups to race pace, a few easy burpees and air squats.                                  |
| 10–15 min         | Small carb top-up if planned, a few sips of water, toilet, to the start pen. Go with the right wave — starting in the wrong one is a DQ.                                              |
| The gun           | Run 1 at or slightly slower than your plan. Settle. Then race your plan one piece at a time.                                                                                          |

### Rules that catch people out

- **Laps:** count your run laps. A missing lap is a penalty of **3–7 min**.
- **IN and OUT arches:** use the wrong one entering or leaving the Roxzone or a station — **2 min** each time.
- **Every station completed in full** — an incomplete station is a DQ.
- **Chalk:** event chalk only, used only where it's provided.
- **No headphones**, phones or cameras on course.
- **Closed-toe shoes** on course — the only exception is the wall ball station.
- **Gloves** are allowed (not grips). Test them on the sled pull and farmers first.
- **Water at aid stations** is for drinking only — tipping it over yourself is a penalty.

### Your head on the day

Don't think about 8 km and 8 stations. Think about the next piece: this run, this station, this length of the sled. Sixteen small jobs, done well, one at a time. When it gets hard — and around the lunges it will — that's not a sign something has gone wrong. That's the race. Keep showing up for the next rep.

#### KIT CHECKLIST

Race shoes you've trained in · race outfit you've trained in · gloves (if tested) · gels or carbs you'll carry · breakfast · water bottle · warm layer for before · spare clothes and a recovery snack for after · confirmation email and ID.

## Questions You're Going to Ask Me

Pre-answered so they don't arrive by message

### **Do I need to run every day?**

No. First-timers do well on 2–3 runs a week, PB chasers on 3–4. Ergs and the bike add aerobic work without the pounding. More running only helps if your body can absorb it.

### **Solo or doubles for my first race?**

Doubles is a brilliant first race — you still run all 8 km but share the station work. Solo is the honest test of your engine. Either is a good choice; just train for the one you've entered.

### **Should I race Open or Pro?**

First HYROX: Open, every time. Move to Pro once Open loads stop being what limits you — when your stations are quick compared with your runs and you've trained at Pro loads for a full block.

### **Can I lose fat during the block?**

Yes, modestly. Fuel your key sessions, run a small deficit on lighter days, and drop the deficit for the last two weeks. See page 16.

### **I missed a week. Do I make it up?**

No. Pick up the plan where you are. If you missed more than a week, repeat your previous week before moving on.

### **I've got a niggle. Train through it?**

Modify, don't ignore. Swap impact for the bike or rower, keep the rest of the week, and get it looked at if it isn't improving within a week. I lost a year pushing through. Twelve weeks is short enough that a week of sensible changes costs far less than a month out.

### **What shoes should I race in?**

A pair you've trained in for weeks, with a grippy outsole for the sleds and enough stability for lunges and burpees. Not a brand-new pair on race day.

### **Should I do a full race simulation?**

Not in a 12-week block. A half simulation in week 9 or 10 and weekly compromised running give you almost everything, without the week of recovery a full simulation costs.

### **How do I know my race pace?**

It's the pace you can hold through your compromised sessions by week 8, not your fresh 1 km time. Use the target split table on page 15 as a cross-check.

### **Can I follow this without a coach?**

Absolutely — that's why I wrote it. What a coach adds is the plan built around your splits, your week and your body, adjusted week by week as things change. If you want that, the next page is for you.

## Want This Built Around You?

The principles are the same. The plan should be yours

This guide gives you the what and the why. Race Preparation gives you the exact plan — built backwards from your race day, around your limiter, your schedule and your life, and adjusted every week based on how you’re actually responding.

### Race Preparation

A\$530 / €325

for 12 weeks · 16-week blocks also available

- A plan structured backwards from race day
- Pace, endurance and engine development — the full Cardiac Pyramid
- Strength training that supports the race, not competes with it
- A fuelling strategy for training and race day
- Taper and race-week guidance

A defined block with a finish line. For HYROX, and for 5 km through to the marathon.

Billed in euro; the Australian figure is approximate and moves with the exchange rate.

### Start here

Five minutes on the form below tells me your race, where your training is now and what’s gone wrong before. Then we talk — a free, no-obligation **30-minute** call about what the next twelve weeks should look like.

|                |                                                                                             |
|----------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Race prep form | <a href="https://swc-raceform.netlify.app/race-prep">swc-raceform.netlify.app/race-prep</a> |
| Website        | <a href="https://secondwindcollective.fit">secondwindcollective.fit</a>                     |
| Email          | <a href="mailto:dan@secondwindcollective.fit">dan@secondwindcollective.fit</a>              |
| Instagram      | <a href="https://www.instagram.com/coach.danmac">@coach.danmac</a>                          |

*Whether you’re lining up for your first HYROX or chasing the time you know is in your legs: build the base, respect the stations, fuel the work, and keep showing up. See you on the carpet. — Dan*

