

From: James

To: Crossfit Tucson

A Short and Humble Response to Apathy Toward, and Rejection of, Training in the Oxidative Pathway

It has become quite apparent that there is a common disinterest among those of us training in this gym. This commonality is a frustration with any distance of running over 800m, and for many, any distance over 400m. More specifically, the greatest discontent shows on days in which a 5k run is scheduled. Of course, discontent also shows for moderate running within a Workout of the Day (WOD) with multiple rounds.

Perhaps it would be prudent to quickly review Crossfit training parameters.

The Pathways

There are three metabolic pathways in which we train:

1. The phosphagen pathway, fuels the highest-powered activities, those that last less than about ten seconds.
2. The glycolytic pathway, dominates moderate-powered activities, those that last up to several minutes.
3. The oxidative pathway, dominates low-powered activities, those that last in excess of several minutes.

For the Crossfitter, all three pathways are vital and none are negotiable. The same applies for anyone concerned with general physical preparedness or great fitness, or any athlete looking for peak performance.

The Benefits of Oxidative Training

Oxidative training, which is known to some as aerobic training, is good for cardio/respiratory endurance and function (one of the ten general physical skills) and fat loss, a correlate to fitness. Both of these benefits are good. Additionally, when one attempts a physical endeavor sure to last longer than several minutes, even up to several hours, it is important to know one's capacities. If tasked with sprinting 100m, nearly everyone can give maximal effort for that distance. If tasked with walking 5 miles, nearly everyone could complete the endeavor. What if one is tasked to run 3 miles as fast as possible? A 100m sprint pace could not possibly be held for that distance. If a person could muster the testicular fortitude to keep that kind of pace for the distance of 3 miles, death would surely result. On the other hand, walking the entire way would certainly be less intensity than the required "as fast as possible." What I am alluding to is efficiency and pacing. Yes, I used the word "pacing."

A benefit that is more mental than physical is that of callousness to boredom and pain. Few of us can withstand the monotony of sufferings for which we are unfamiliar. Why can one person push through the pain of a workout during which another person of paralleled fitness decides to rest? The difference is one of them has become familiar with that pain.

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on my mar

Examples

For a practical example, imagine running out of gas in an inconvenient location. I

have come scarily close to running out of gas twice. Once was on a little traveled road near the Mohave Desert, and once on the freeway between Yuma and San Diego. Neither was close to a busy town, gas station, or cell phone reception (Murphy's Law). Do you think someone would have stopped to help me? Probably not. Would you stop to help a stranger in the middle of nowhere? My options would have been to walk or run to the nearest gas station or town. My trip through Mohave was in July near sunrise (Murphy's Law again). Being that the sun was rising, as well as the temperature, my option would have been run. Not a pleasant thought.

Here is another practical example. Imagine there is a flood in your town and sand bags need to be stacked near a levee. You must be efficient and pace yourself. If you rush off and stack 20 sand bags but then need to take a lunch break and siesta, you will have fallen well short. Similarly, if you can stack sandbags for several hours but you can only stack one sand bag every few minutes because you cannot endure any real sort of intensity, you will also fall well short.

These examples may seem extreme, but I am sure you can think of several realistic tasks or circumstances for which some oxidative training would be beneficial for you.

Long Distance is a Relative Term

Is ten feet a long distance? To a snail, yes. To a Giraffe, not at all. Is 1 mile a long distance? To a marathoner, no. To a sprinter, perhaps. Is a 5k or 10k a long distance for a WOD. Considering the vastness of the oxidative pathway, these WODs are relatively diminutive. There is good reason why a Marathoner would consider a 5k and 10k short, maybe even easy, distances—they do not come close to the 26.2 miles they Marathoner is used to racing. There is little thought given to making any of you Marathoners or Ultra-Marathoners. The goal here is merely to make you extremely fit. If you can manage a 5k, how much shorter and easier might a 400m or 800m feel. For those worried about muscle loss, these runs are not done enough and are not long enough to decay muscle mass and strength.

Conclusion

It is understood that many people “just don't like to run,” as I hear this often. However, this answer is indistinct, as it does not tell me the root of the disinterest. I speculate fear is the underlying cause for most. Some fear being slow or looking foolish. I hope, by this point, many of us feel a closeness to those training with us; some may even feel like family. Also, the camaraderie that comes from laboring for the same goal drowns out the difference in time it took each of us. Some fear the pain that accompanies this type of workout. For those of you who fear exercise induced pain, you do know you are training at a Crossfit gym, right? Additionally, the pain will eventually subside, or, at least, you will become quite good at managing it. Still others have had previous injuries from running. If this is your situation, help can be provided to correct your running form and technique.

In short, 5k runs will continue as part of our regimen, and 5k runs will continue to be required.



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