

GORE-TEX® Transalpine-Run– Let the Training Begin!

I have participated in the GORE-TEX® Transalpine-Run since 2011 and coaching athletes for the event since 2013. Every year, I learn something new as an athlete and as a coach. One thing that hasn't changed, however, is that running for 7 days, across 4 countries, up and over the alps, requires specific terrain management and mental practice in order to show up fully prepared. This year I am writing a series of training accompaniments that are designed to be paired with the Novice and Experienced online training programs I've created to help runners be even more successful with their race preparations and strategy. The first topic in my series covers terrain consideration. Happy training and #keeporunning!

Terrain Considerations

Road Running: Despite having 16,000m of ascent/descent over 7 days, the course has a lot more runnable terrain than you might think and you would be wise to build some of your mileage up on the road. The stages almost always start and finish in little mountain villages that require running on pavement/paths before hitting the trails, or linking runners through villages. The alps are also home to some of the most amazing ski resorts in the world and access to some of these high mountain resorts often requires running down ski service roads for upwards of 8-10km. It's important to replicate some of this pounding before you arrive on race day. Just be careful not to overdo it or do too much too soon. The body is a remarkable adaptable tool but it needs time and proper recovery in-between to adapt without causing injury.

- **Tip #1)** If you're not accustomed to road running, start with one of your 'recovery' runs which is low volume and intensity and take it to the road. Gradually build into longer road runs of 60-90min. minimum.
- **Tip #2)** Choose some long trail runs where you focus on running 2-10km road sections before hitting the trails. Subsequently, reverse this and run 2-10km road sections at the end of some long trail runs.

Vertical: The 2018 route will involve over 16,000m of ascent/descent. As a result, it's important to do enough back to back long runs that have elevation focus, as well as incorporate some training days that are vertical focused only. Depending on where you live will determine the type of terrain you have to work with. I recommend my athletes do repeats of 2km up and 2km down with approximately 300-400m per ascent/descent. We also build into upwards of 3 hour vertical repeat sessions. The other option is a 10-11km ascent with 1000-1200m of ascent/descent over approximately 1.5hrs to 2hrs.

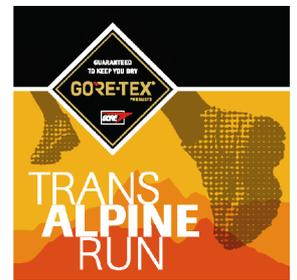
- **Tip #1)** Make some of your "long steady runs" more vertical focused. Depending on where you live and what kind of terrain you have access to, choose a hill that is 200m to 1000m and do repeats to help prepare your legs for the long steady ascents and pounding descents. This can be effective and 'sandwiched' into 1hr to 4hr training sessions depending on your experience.

Time on your feet: Time on your feet is more important than speed in your long runs. Running long and steady helps build the endurance required for this race. Bare in mind, however, that the more intensity you insert into your training the more recovery you will require. Most runners, beginners in particular, are better suited to focus on the endurance aspect of their training and keeping intensity on the lower end of the scale.

- **Tip #1)** Stage racing yields minimal recovery in between stages and the amount of stress your body experiences increases throughout the week. A race like the Gore-Tex Transalpine Run requires a large endurance base, so focus on putting the time on your feet first. Having said that, getting to the start line slightly under-prepared and rested will give you a far better chance of completion than if you show up even slightly over-trained or injured.

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Cross-Training: It's hard for most people to uphold a high volume of running all year round and training for the Gore-Tex Transalpine Run does, indeed, require a lot of running but our bodies can benefit greatly from cycling, swimming, yoga, hiking etc. Cross training will help build fitness early into your training plan without risking overuse injuries or burnout. Strength and yoga focus will help with potential imbalances and weaknesses early and is an effective way to help with injury prevention.

- **Tip #1)** Don't be afraid to trade off some early season running miles for nordic skiing, cycling, swimming etc. or
- **Tip #2)** Trade off some miles throughout your program if you start to feel any niggles/injury or burn out.

Rest: I can't stress the important of rest enough. Your training plan is designed to challenge and stress the body but it's during proper rest that your body repairs, gains strength and the energy required for the following training block.

- **Tip #1)** Keep your training consistent and avoid big bumps in volume and/or intensity.
- **Tip #2)** Take adequate rest in-between building blocks in your training plan and reduce your volume by 20-50% on rest weeks, schedule massage, make more time for yoga/stretching. Remember...you don't need to be fit for the Gore-Tex Transalpine Run in the spring. You need to be fit by September. Enjoy the training journey, balance out work and rest ratio's and most importantly have fun!

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