

CLASS FORMAT IDEAS

Carmelita Widdifield, CALA Certified in Water Running and Aquafitness

I currently teach two types of Aqua Run classes at the Calgary Winter Club. The first class started as a 45 minute lunch time class. It quickly stretched into 60 minutes, due to the positive response toward the high intensity workout. Participants include **recreational runners, marathoners and triathletes**. There are more men than women. Most of the participants were attracted to the Aqua Running workout due to injuries they had sustained during land based training. They were looking for a workout that would provide a **challenge to the cardiovascular system without impact** and add variety to the regular running regime.

This particular clientele appreciates a basic, athletic style water running class. Simple, uncomplicated movements allow them to concentrate on running technique and intensity.

These basic movements are incorporated into a variety of long and short intervals, training in specific 'Rate of Perceived Exertion (RPE) zones. This type of training will improve running economy, lactate threshold and VO_2 max.

Being '**hitched**' or '**tethered**' to the lane rope (via a bungee cord) is of benefit when a participant first begins to water run. During the transition phase from land to water running, there is a tendency to lose focus while trying to maintain good running form, stay on the spot and keep the body core stabilized. The 'hitch' assists the water runner to remain stationary and keep focused.

A metronome was used initially to **set the cadence for water running**. Once the transition phase from land to water was complete the metronome was no longer necessary. Using the metronome during the early phase, formalizes the orientation. It creates an atmosphere that is more conducive to teaching and reinforcing the running technique.

Once technique was 'mastered' and runners were oriented to the water environment music was introduced to break from the monotony of the metronome.

The **music tempo** used for water running varies from 122 bpm – 138 bpm. During the orientation phase, I prefer to keep the tempo in the 122 - 130 bpm range. This allows for enhanced instruction on 'how' to increase intensity by using the water, rather than simply relying on speed of movement, which may compromise ROM and have a negative affect on the health of the shoulder joints.

SAMPLE ONE - WATER RUNNING CLASS

Following is a sample class which includes 4 different intervals. Once the warm up is complete, each 'timed interval' targets a specific zone on the 'Brennan RPE chart' (A scale of 1: very light - 5: very hard). The complete class design is posted onto a white board for the class. This method allows the water runner to know what is expected during the work out.

LONG INTERVAL: NUMBER ONE

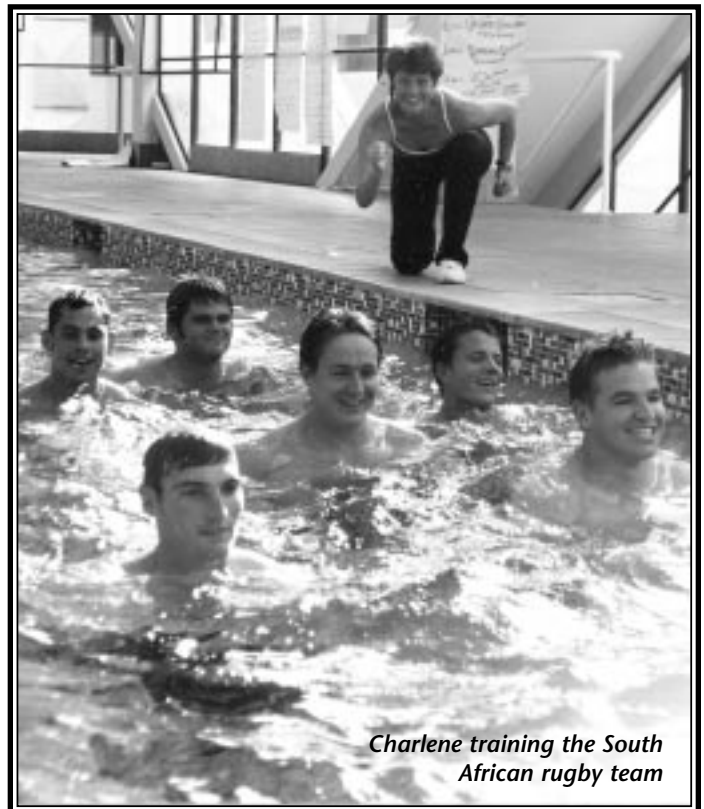
1) 10 min. "RUNNING": @ RPE 3.0

- 1 minute is spent on each of the following technique tips:

- a) tall spine: chin back
- b) shoulder blade squeeze
- c) active abs
- d) gluts
- e) leg action: down focus
- f) leg action: drive knee forward
- g) arm action: pendular
- h) ROM: show knuckles; happy face back with elbow
- i) plant feet: heel, ball, toe
- j) intensity

- 10 second heart rate and RPE check

- 1 min. Active Recovery @ RPE 2.5 (take this time to EXPLAIN SECOND INTERVAL)



Charlene training the South African rugby team

LONG INTERVAL: NUMBER TWO

2) 9 min. "OBSTACLE": @ RPE 3.0 – 3.5

- 1 minute is spent on each of the following movements:
 - a) narrow jog
 - b) wide jog: focus down (stomp), feet & hips parallel, hip width apart
 - c) narrow jog: focus up high knees
 - d) alternate narrow/wide jog (nickname: TIRES)
 - e) narrow jog
 - f) wide jog: focus down (stomp)
 - g) narrow jog: focus up high knees
 - h) alternate narrow/wide jog (TIRES) 2x tempo
 - i) SPRINT finish
- 10 second heart rate and RPE check
- 1 minute Active Recovery @ RPE 2.0 (take this time to EXPLAIN THIRD INTERVAL)

LONG INTERVAL: NUMBER THREE

3) 8 min. "PYRAMID": @ RPE 4.0 – 3.0

- 1) 4.0 Tempo // 3.0 - 1/2 tempo
 - 2) 4.0 Tempo // 3.0 - 1/2 tempo.

20 sec. / 20 sec.	60 sec. / 60 sec.
40 sec. / 40 sec.	40 sec. / 40 sec.
60 sec. / 60 sec.	20 sec. / 20 sec.
- 10 second heart rate and RPE check
 - 1 minute Active Recovery @ RPE 2.0 (take time to EXPLAIN FOURTH INTERVAL)

LONG INTERVAL: NUMBER FOUR

4) 7 min. "RUNNING": RPE 3.5 – 4.5

- 1 minute x 7 reps 30 sec. @ RPE 3.5 // 30 sec. @ RPE 4.5
- Focus: Breathing jog T / jog T – dbl effort (or) jog T / jog 2x T
- 10 sec. heart-rate and RPE check
- 2 min. Active Recovery @ RPE 1.5 and stretching

During the Active recovery phase:

- Use 1/2 t 'narrow jog' or 1/2 t 'x ski' leg movements with 'x ski' or 'chest hug & squeeze' arms.
- Perform at a light intensity (between 1 - 2 on the RPE scale).
- Add dynamic stretching (full range of motion) between intervals.

SAMPLE TWO - WATER RUNNING CLASS

The SECOND type of Aqua Running Class is a 45 minute morning class. This class consists mainly of *non-runners, who attend for overall fitness benefits*. The same class and interval design can be used, with some changes. A variety of movements are used, to break from the monotony of the running arm and leg action. Out of the four

intervals, one or two will focus on the Aqua Running technique. This style of class is greatly appreciated by the members, as they feel they get more of a balanced workout.

MORE AQUA RUN TRAINING IDEAS

Following are a couple of the Intervals that I use for the Aqua Run Training class: the bold print is what I write on a white board for the class to see and understand.

1) *The Wave: "a surge of energy"*

- 20 seconds of each – RPE 2.0 / 3.0 / 4.0**
- 10 minutes of continual work, with RPE 2.0 being the Active Recovery phase**

Note: Depending on the number of participants, this can be done as a group or split into 3 groups. i.e. As group 1 finishes the first 20 seconds @ RPE 2.0, group 2 would begin RPE 2.0 and group 1 would go on to RPE 3.0. After 40 seconds, group 3 will begin RPE 2.0, group 2 would go on to RPE 3.0 and group 1 would start RPE 4.0... and so on. The duration of each level can be adjusted down to 10 seconds or up to 30 seconds each. The time or RPE can be easily adjusted, depending on the fitness level of the participants. This takes some practice to co-ordinate and using a stop watch is highly recommended.

2) *Run, Cycle, Power Walk*

- **3 minutes of each – RPE 3.0 / 3.5 / 4.0**
- **9 minutes of continual work**
- **1 minute Active Recovery @ RPE 2.0**

Note: Power Walk is similar to tempo x-ski. Can be done as 1 min. of Run, Cycle, P. Walk @ RPE 2.0, then repeat at 3.0 and 4.0 OR Run 1 min @ RPE 3.0, 3.5, 4.0; Cycle 1 min @ 3.0, 3.5, 4.0; Walk 1 min @ 3.0, 3.5, 4.0

3) *Tag" Interval: is basically "You're it"*

- **RPE 3.0 – 4.5**
- **When "tagged" work to achieve RPE 4.5 then tag someone else.**
- **Ease off and maintain RPE 3.0 until "tagged" again.**

This is a really "fun" interval and can be used at any time during the workout. I find this interval is a great way to complete a class. It is easier to manage with smaller classes. In larger classes, split the class into groups to make this work. This technique encourages participants to get to know others in the class, especially new comers.

Tip: Write everyone's name on a white board or chalk board, so they can see and remember. If you notice that some people are being left out, the instructor can easily take over the "tagging."