

PART 3 – TRAINING TIPS

CREATING A PROGRAM TO MEET YOUR GOALS AND FITNESS LEVEL

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3.1 SET GOALS

Take some time to determine what all of your goals are for your Vasa Trainer workouts. These objectives, especially if written down, will guide you in completing each Vasa workout and will help you to gain the full benefits of using the machine. Set goals that are ambitious, but realistic for you. Most people who get injured, burned-out, or discouraged set their goals too high and try to do too much, too soon. Set a long-term goal, several months to a year in advance, as well as a few short term goals to keep you motivated. Your goals may be one or more of the following:

DAILY GOALS FOR EACH DAY'S WORKOUT INCLUDE

- Today's technique item to work on
- Training for general fitness
- Training for competition
- Today's conditioning item
- Cross-training for other sports
- Today's mental training item
- More variety and fun in your exercise
- Training to get back in shape
- Training to lose some weight

3.2 CHOOSE THE RIGHT TRAINING PROGRAM FOR YOU

You are unique and your body has unique requirements in terms of what it needs for total fitness and health. There are countless ways to do a complete exercise training program, and there are just as many resources for learning more about how to do them. You can formulate your workout routines from the training suggestions in this manual, other Vasa literature, qualified professionals, a local health club, or from books and magazine articles. Regardless, it is essential that you begin your Vasa workouts with a program that meets your needs. Be open to adjusting your program once in a while. Keep your goals before you, guiding you to success and enjoyment with your Vasa Trainer.

There are three key guidelines you can use to formulate the right program (referred to as F.I.T.)

- **Frequency** (how many times per week you workout)
- **Intensity** (how hard you workout during exercise)
- **Time** (how many minutes your workout lasts)

Depending on your needs and goals, you can use these three guidelines to direct your program. For example, if you want to do an endurance workout, you can select a low resistance and do 15 - 25 minutes of swim/paddle strokes on the Vasa Trainer. If your goal is to gain swim or paddle specific power and strength, then you would do a workout with high resistance and 12 repetitions per set, and 5 - 10 sets per workout. It is generally accepted by fitness experts that to maintain aerobic fitness, you need to do aerobic exercise for a minimum of 20 minutes, 3 times each week at an intensity that challenges your cardiovascular system (usually above 65% Maximum heart rate). If you choose to do aerobic training with the Vasa, we recommend that you do it 3 to 6 times per week. You may wish to supplement your training in other activities with Vasa workouts each week. For example, if you are a triathlete and you can't get to a pool during the mid-

week due to lack of time or pool availability, use the Vasa Trainer to help you maintain sports-specific fitness. Swim teams with athletes who cannot go in the water due to ear infections or injuries can have these swimmers use the Vasa Trainer right on the pool deck, thereby maintaining fitness and contact with the rest of the team. If you are interested in multi-sport fitness and total body strength and endurance, the Vasa Trainer will help you gain and maintain fantastic fitness.

Strength training is commonly done three times per week. However, many athletes will do strength training 3 - 6 times per week, alternating muscle groups every other day in order to provide proper recovery for each group exercised. The guidelines which follow in this manual will help you decide on the type of program you'll want to do.

It is most important that you keep motivated and excited about training with Vasa and training in general. Here are some ideas for staying with your training program and enjoying Vasa workouts to the fullest:

- Use a variety of exercises, changing your routine once in a while.
- Set up your Vasa Trainer in a comfortable, well-lit place.
- Make an upbeat music tape to accompany your routine. Some people even watch TV or listen to the radio while they train.
- Train with a friend occasionally.
- Schedule your workouts so they fit easily into your day. It helps to plan ahead and even write your workout time into your weekly planner, thus making a "training appointment" with yourself.
- Refer to the workout programs by Olympic Swimming Coach Richard Shoulberg and Coach John Holohan and the Circuits by Rob Sleamaker presented later in this manual.

3.3 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Tracking your improvements on the Vasa Trainer, as in all training, will be a key in reaching your goals. One of the most effective methods for monitoring progress is to keep an accurate training log. A good log can serve to help you monitor the effects of each workout and the stresses associated with training. The sample Vasa training log included in this manual can serve as a guide for tracking these components in your training program. You are more likely to be satisfied with your exercise program if you keep an effective log.

3.4 ADJUST YOUR PROGRAM WHEN NECESSARY

The Vasa Trainer is designed for swim-specific training, as well as for general conditioning. In this manual, we've outlined workout programs that are specific to various sports. If you are training for a specific sport, it is generally accepted that your training is most effective if it is specific to that sport during the 2-4 months preceding and during that sport season. For example, swimmers might train using more general strength exercises along with Vasa exercises in the off-season and change their routine to the swim-specific workout program in the pre-season and during the competitive season.

It's a good idea to test yourself occasionally in order to make appropriate adjustments in your workout program. For example, if you are following the guidelines for strength training with your Vasa, you might be doing each exercise for 8 - 12 repetitions. You will want to increase the resistance for a given exercise when 12 repetitions are easy. You would increase the resistance to the point that 8 repetitions would be challenging. Stay at that level until 12 reps are easy, then adjust again.

If you are doing aerobic workouts with your Vasa, you can use heart rate to check your progress. For example, you might do a Vasa workout for 20 minutes at a heart rate of 130 - 150 bpm, all at a given resistance. After a few weeks, you might not be able to get your heart rate level up at that same resistance - thus you would need to increase resistance in order to keep the workout intensity at the desired level. Check yourself every 3-4 weeks. If you are not making the improvements that you wish, you may need to change the workout plan.

3.5 STAY MOTIVATED FROM WITHIN

“Make the most of yourself, for that is all there is of you.”

- Ralph Waldo Emerson

Every athlete and coach knows that participation in sports involves a lot of choices. We choose how many hours each week to train and compete, what foods we will eat, what drills we will do to refine technique, and what equipment we'll use to reach our best performance. One of the most important choices we make on a daily basis is our mind set for our participation in sports. In other words, the mental approach we take into training and racing really comes down to a choice.

We all want to do our best in sports, as in life. What can we do to make our dreams a reality? How can we stay motivated and focused to train and race up to our potential? Here are a few ideas which will help you reach for and achieve your goals:

MAKE THE BEST OUT OF EVERY SITUATION (EVEN IF IT'S A BAD ONE)

Every athlete, from beginners to World Champions, can choose to get 100 percent out of themselves in every situation, even if the situation isn't optimal. It comes down to making a conscious choice that no matter what, you will give it your best. There are two points that are important to consider.

First, it's likely that you will not complete 100% of the workouts that you plan. Even the Pros know this to be a fact. This is not a perfect world and humans are anything but perfect! Job, family, social, and civic commitments often require more time than we project. So, the key is to do as many of your planned workouts as possible and to make the most of each one. If you consistently miss or don't complete over 15 percent of your workouts, then it's time to change your plan.

Second, there is always going to be someone who is faster than you (if not now, then sooner or later). There are many variables that contribute to who will win the race on any given day. Keep this in mind, but be ready to give your very best anyway. Prior to each training session or before a race, challenge yourself by listing a few non-outcome goals to concentrate on. For example, concentrate on using a powerful finish with every stroke during practice. Another non-outcome goal would be to have your pre-race organization (clothes, goggles, food, drinks, registration, etc.) on time and smooth. After the workout or race is over, rate yourself on how well you accomplished these goals. You'll be a winner, regardless of your place on the results sheet. Remember, it is the sum of all the parts that make up the whole of a successful performance. An athlete's ability to stay focused "in the moment" and perform each part successfully is what leads to personal triumph.

BE VERY CLEAR ABOUT WHY YOU ARE EXERCISING, TRAINING AND RACING

There are as many legitimate reasons to train and race as there are people participating. In other words, your reasons for your sports participation are just as important as anyone's. The trick is knowing what the paybacks are for you, and you alone. If you're like me, you've got a busy professional, family, social, and civic life. I don't have aspirations to become an Olympian. That's probably true for most of us and it's totally appropriate. Elite athletes with lofty goals don't need competition from me, anyway! Your reasons for participation at any level are valid. You don't need to win your age-group or even be in the top half of the results list to feel just as important as the winner. Remember all of the positive contributions you are making to yourself and those around you through your participation. Excellent health, top level fitness, personal goals and successes ... all these and more are just as important as winning. Once you are clear about the reasons for your sports activities, it will make it significantly easier to complete your training program each day. Ultimately, when the going gets tough, be it because of miserable weather, a flat tire, a busy schedule, or a cramp in your side, you'll be clear about your reasons for participation and you'll be able to push through to the finish. Finally, it is important to update your reasons for participation on a regular basis. "Check in" with yourself every few months and make any necessary changes.

USE POSITIVE SELF-TALK AND JUST SAY YES

You choose the level of your achievements by setting the level of your expectations. The words that we speak to ourselves (spoken by that little voice that's always chattering to us inside our heads) are powerful. The words can be positive or negative and we have a choice about what our inner voice says to us. Do you tell yourself that you'll never have great technique - or do you speak about getting better technique with every practice? Do you think that you're too weak or do you pat yourself on the back after every strength session on your Vasa Trainer? Do you find yourself dreading training, thinking about how painful, boring, or miserable it is or do you look forward to every workout with enthusiasm and as an opportunity to express yourself? Most people naturally avoid anything associated with negativity. There is a positive feedback mechanism for the body. Positive thoughts give you energy. Just say YES and notice how you feel.

One way to engage in the positive feedback mechanism is to express your individual limitations in a positive manner. If you planned to do an interval session of 10 x 400 meter freestyle repeats and you only completed 7 before you ran out of time, you have two ways in which you could respond. A negative way to think of the workout would be to say to yourself, "I only did 7 of my 10 intervals". A positive way to think of the workout would be to say, "I did 7 intervals and 2 were faster than I was doing all of last month".

Another way to engage the positive feedback mechanism is with affirmations. These are positive statements which you repeat to yourself regularly, thereby embedding the thoughts in your subconscious. Next time you're feeling a little tired during a workout, try repeating over and over, "I am a swift and powerful athlete." Of course, you can make up your own affirmations. Be sure they are in present tense. Try it out - you'll be surprised at the lift you'll get! "I say YES to life!"

AVOID RUTS - KEEP YOUR TRAINING AND RACING FUN, EXCITING, AND FRESH

Like a hot new song on the radio which gets tiresome after hearing it 100 times in a month, training the same way all the time will get boring, too. We all have the choice to keep training spicy and full of variety. Here are a few tips on how to keep it fresh:

- Vary the locations of your workouts, even if it means running your favorite loop backwards!
- Train with different people occasionally. Pick someone who will challenge you.
- Train at different times of the day.
- Vary the intensity of your training. Go hard one day, easy the next.
- Pick one technique improving drill for every training session, even if the drill only takes 3 minutes.
- Look for all the humorous situations happening around you!

Remember, your mind set is as important as your body's fitness level for determining how much fun, personal satisfaction, and athletic success you have. "If it is to be, it is up to me!"



Olympic Swim Coach Mark Schubert encouraging Olympic Champions Lenny Krayzelburg and Brad Bridgewater