

## Loathing 800's

800's are one half of a mile; two laps around a track. For me, running 800's are . . . less than ideal. From the very beginning for me, running 800's are an exercise in futility. I've run them in a group. I've run them by myself. I've run them in the morning. I've run them in the evening. I've run them with green . . . never mind.

I can run 400's until the cows come home. I can run 400's, herd the cows, and resume running the 400's without missing a lap. I've done it: both when I was fast enough to race the attempt, nudging the herd and when I became sufficiently slow to get back without being missed. I can run kilometer repeats.

Kilometer repeats at 10-kilometer pace, followed by a 200-meter jog, followed by a 400 at 3000-meter pace is my favorite track workout. At least it was when I was fast enough to suffer through the workout, breathing heavy, focused on lifting ankles, slogging between sets. By the third set, the legs are heavy. By the fifth set, the legs are trashed. When I was in tippy-top shape, those were impressive. Now, I slog without differentiation between fast and slow. I can run mile segments.

Repeat miles at 10-kilometer pace when I was younger and could separate my training paces. Repeat miles at threshold pace with short recovery. Repeat miles without rest on a long marathon training run. Mile repeats are best run on a wooded walking path, along a river. Come to think of it, 800's aren't half bad on a flattish path. Much like lumpy cream of wheat.

And then, there are Yasso 800's.

Yasso 800's is a workout improving endurance speed, claiming to predict a runner's marathon finish time. It does and it doesn't. when you can run 10 800's in 3:30 with a 3;30 jog, the assertion is that you can run a 3:30 marathon. Improving running strength through repeated 800's run at a time mirroring the projected marathon finish time is a threshold effort: you're not running too fast and your pace allows you to finish the workout.

Remember, a marathon is run at 99-percent aerobic effort. We don't sprint the distance; we don't race the marathon as if were even a distance below 26.2 miles. We're not elite runners, though we make think we are elite. Yasso 800's pacing is anerobic. That is not necessarily a bad thing, as that workout can be part of the grocery bag of workouts over a 12-16 training period.

That said, the Yasso 800's are too fast and the rest is too long. A four-hour marathon is run at 9:09 per mile pace. In running a Yasso 800's workout, that four-hour marathoner would be required to run an 800 in four minutes, which would be eight-minute pace. That would correlate to a 3:30 marathon finishing time. Yeah, right.

A long run with the pace increasing over the last four miles to marathon pace makes more sense. So does running 6-8 one-mile repeats at marathon pace with a short 2-1:00

jog between each, the recovery time coming down the further you go into your marathon training block. I have a gazillion million samples from which to choose.

But you know what Yasso 800's do for you? Running is an intellectual sport because your running is determined by what's going on in your head. In running the first Yasso 800 at preset pace, you have an equal amount of time to think about the next one. And then the one after that, all the way through to the 10th Yasso 800. This creates two results moving along the same path: one is your brain on 800's, maintaining the pace, pushing to keep the pace, relaxing to run the pace, and the other is the distance you wind up running on your recovery jog. Add up your recovery distance with your 800's. not a bad 7.5 – 8.5-mile pace, now is it?

Then, there are 20 by 400 with a 200-meter jog, but that's for another day.