

EVEN GREAT COACHING NOT IMMUNE TO ECONOMY

By DON SIKORSKI
Special to the Bulletin

Dr. Jack Daniels is widely considered to be one of the innovators of the distance running world. The renowned coach has specialized in assisting distance runners maximize their potential through the art of training at specific levels of effort and acclimating the body to the rigors of long distance running, focusing on performance improvement. Daniels' credentials range from his assistance in Jim Ryun's preparation for the high altitude of the 1968 Olympic Games in Mexico City to last year's Women's Olympic Marathon Trials, when an unheralded Magdalena Lewy Boulet earned a place on the podium. He had worked with dozens of national class runners over the course of his 40+ year coaching career. Yet despite these credentials that have elevated Daniels to an almost legendary status, economic downturns have recently put Dr. Daniels out of work. Northern Arizona University has closed its High Altitude Training Center, located in Flagstaff, due to a lack of available funding. Daniels now finds himself out of a job.

A look back on his career shows that Daniels' resume is much more diverse than simply his attachment to world class talent. Daniels is the former Cross Country coach at Cortland (NY) State University, a place that imported average talent and hard working athletes and exported highly successful teams and individuals on a consistent basis. He spent years as the coach of Nike's elite Athletic West project in the 1980's. With a Ph.D. in Exercise Psychology, Daniels' extensive research on the physics of distance running, compiled in his bestselling book "Daniels' Running Formula", led the charge in the concept of training smarter. First outlining the basic understanding of the principles of time and effort measured over specific distances, Daniels' teachings were based on the concept that runners training at specific paces and levels of effort during assigned sessions would reap the benefits of maximum fitness gains as opposed to those runners who simply hammered out runs with little notion of pace or effort. The practices applied from all runners ranging from beginners to world class athletes, with training paces customized to match current performance levels at each distance. It also allowed runners to calculate and predict what time was attainable at different distance if the proper training for that distance race was carried out.

Daniels teachings also featured a training run now utilized by distance runners at all levels of ability; the tempo run. Tempo runs can best be described at a pace that is moderately hard, close to a 10 mile to half marathon race pace for experienced runners, carried out over a duration of ideally 20-30 minutes or broken into segments (of approximately 85% effort) with very short rest periods. Implementing these types of training runs into your schedule will allow you to gain efficiencies, better process oxygen to assist tiring muscles, and sustain pace when fatigue sets in. Training tables established by Daniels spell out specific training paces for these tempo runs, as well as intervals, long runs, and recovery days, each based on the runner's current level of fitness measured by race time performances at different distances. These teachings allowed coaches and athletes to become more knowledgeable, train with a more specific sense of purpose, and ultimately improve performance.

"Daniels' Running Formula" is a highly recommended read for coaches, athletes, and anyone interested in achieving improved fitness levels as a distance runner. To check out more of Daniels' teachings, also check out www.runsmartproject.com/daniels and gain a better understanding of the coach's principles and practices.

Racing Update

A pair of University of Connecticut runners will compete in the 800 meter race at the 2009 NCAA Indoor Track and Field Championships in College Station, Texas. Junior Mike Rutt is seeded 6th in the 14 man field (1:48.18) while teammate Brian Gagnon, a senior, is seeded 11th (1:48.66) in the very competitive field. 2008 Olympian Andrew Wheating of Oregon is the race's top seed. David McCarthy and Hayden McLaren of Providence College both ran under 4 minutes and are contenders to win the One Mile event. Oregon's Galen Rupp is the top seed in both the 3,000 and 5,000 meter races. For the ladies, Providence Friar Danette Doetzel is expected to contend for the 5,000 meter title.....Congratulations to the 12 new members of the Norwich Free Academy Sports Hall of Fame, specifically Clem McGrath (Class of 1957), that will be inducted into Slater Hall at a ceremony on Saturday, March 28th. McGrath is a long-time area runner and winner of the 1956 Cross Country State Open. Former NFA Track star John Newsom (Class of 1987) is also an inductee.....Runners looking to hit the streets for their first competitive effort of 2009 might want to venture to Baltic on Saturday, March 28th for the for the 16th Annual St. Joseph's School 3 Mile Race. Organized by long time runner Glen Costello, the event, which begins at the school, features a ½ mile Kid's Fun Run at 9:00am followed by the 3 mile race at 9:30am. North Stonington's Jeff Wadecki (15:25) and Oakdale's Laurie Schaeffer (19:17) are the defending champions. Contact Glen at rungdc@aol.com or check out the race's webpage at runningintheusa.com/stjosephschoolrace for more details.

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