

Periodization For The Pup:

Part I – Understanding the Phases

Contributed by The Crew at SportMutt

Wednesday, 1 March 2006

SportMutt continues to make strides toward gaining knowledge of what we can do to improve our K9's performance. Dock Jumping is our number one focus here at SportMutt. With the sport being relatively new and so different than other traditional dog sports, we have learned that we must reach out to other competitors who have knowledge in areas that pertain to specifics of training that we feel benefit our dogs in this sport. A great competitor, a former world-record holder in Extreme Vertical, and a very knowledgeable trainer, Angie Jones has contributed this article for SportMutt.

Basically periodization, also referred to as planned performance training, divides training into phases. The phases are commonly referred to as preparation, competitive, peaking and transition. Each phase of training is designed to enhance a specific training component(s) to prepare the athlete for optimum performance. Such components would include aerobic conditioning, muscular strength and endurance, speed endurance, maximum speed, power and skill. Improvements to these components occur by overloading the muscular, nervous and energy systems of the body. Overload means to apply stress above normal workloads. Or in other words, challenge the athlete's present physical status. The process of rest/recovery, from the fatigue produced from overloading, allows the body to super-compensate (positively adapts to the stress to a level above what was previously experienced). Optimizing training through the control of this overload/rest/rebuilding cycle is the primary purpose of Periodization.

The **preparation phase** is considered preseason and is designed to physical prepare the athlete for competition. It is often subdivide into a general preparation phase and a specific preparation phase.

As the first phase of periodization planning, the **general preparation phase** focuses on the overall fitness of the athlete. Laying a foundation of aerobic conditioning and muscular strength and endurance are important aspects of training during this phase. A strong aerobic energy system will allow the athlete to recover more quickly from the intensity demands of later phases. Gradually increasing muscle mass and improving the muscular strength, endurance and flexibility will help to condition the athlete against muscle and connective tissue type injuries. At this point in training, the intensity is low and the volume is high. Volume and Intensity are dependent and can't be separated. As one increases, the other will decrease and vise versa.

Intensity – How hard you work.

Volume – The amount of work.

The **specific preparation phase** transitions training to a more sport specific focus. Functional strength is a goal and is achieved by choosing exercises that strengthen muscles specific to the demands of the sport, plus they will more closely replicate the actions of the skill. Training at this point should also emphasize the demands of the anaerobic energy system. This is more specific to Dockdog events than aerobic training and is conditioned through activities that are short in duration and high in intensity. Volume begins to decrease as intensity increase.

Aerobic – Long and slow.

Anaerobic – Short and fast.

During the **competitive phase** it is common to train though the early stages of competition. The conditioning levels, of the training components that were the focus of the specific phase, intensify as the volume lowers even more. Developing power and maximum speed and improving skill become the primary goals. A greater need for rest is necessary due to the high intensity demands, especially during the later stages of competition when a reduction in the workload will allow the athlete to replenish energy and overcome the fatigue and stress of competition.

Maintaining explosive power and fine tuning the skill are essential during the **Peaking Phase**. Tapering (reducing the workload) is the most critical factor in this phase if optimal performance is to be achieved. Tapering allows the

body to build-up its maximum strength, speed and endurance potential to 100% from the fatigue of previous training.

The **Transition Phase** is the off-season. Take time off from after the last major competition of the year. Stay active to maintain good fitness, but allow your dog's body time to recover or heal from the demands of a competitive year by avoiding or reducing the intensity demands of training for the events. This is a good opportunity to try other activities (such as hunting, agility, flyball, etc.). Doing events non-related to big air or EV will refresh your dog not only physically, but also mentally for the next season of Dockdogs.

Rome was not built in a day. The physiological changes required for peak performance will not occur overnight either. This is a long term approach to planning for success that should be taken step-by-step. Apply it and your dog will be climbing up the ladder of success.