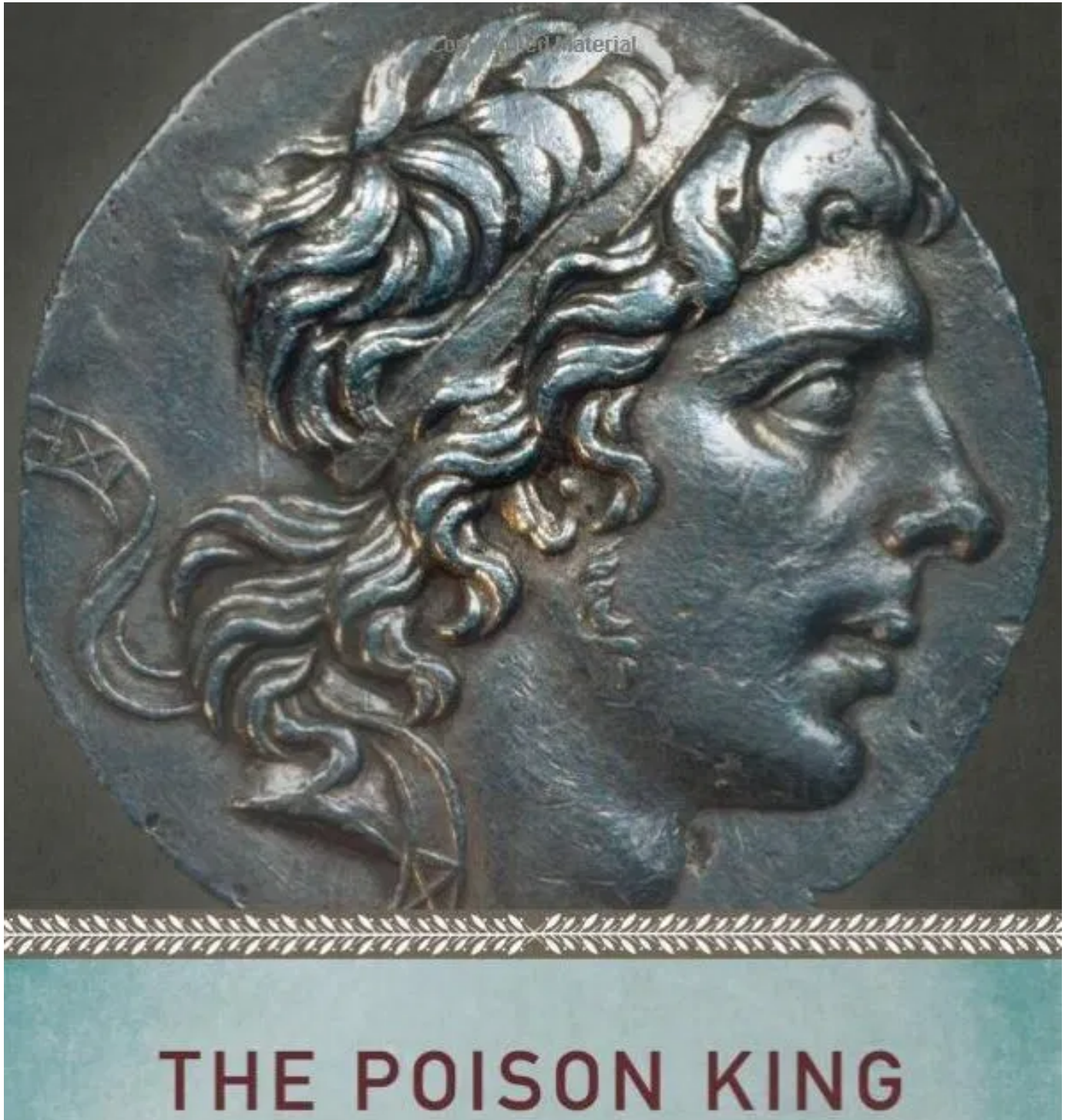

□ ([HTTP://ITCCCA.COM/](http://ITCCCA.COM/)), □ NEWS AND BLOGS ([HTTP://ITCCCA.COM/NEWS-AND-BLOGS/](http://ITCCCA.COM/NEWS-AND-BLOGS/)), □
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□ ([HTTP://ITCCCA.COM/12650/2016/12/THE-JOY-OF-BEING-SERIOUS-A-WINTER-TRAINING-CASE-STUDY/](http://ITCCCA.COM/12650/2016/12/THE-JOY-OF-BEING-SERIOUS-A-WINTER-TRAINING-CASE-STUDY/)), □
([HTTP://ITCCCA.COM/12585/2016/11/TFC-4-EARLY-BIRD-RATE-175-ENDS-THURSDAY-225-AT-THE-DOOR/](http://ITCCCA.COM/12585/2016/11/TFC-4-EARLY-BIRD-RATE-175-ENDS-THURSDAY-225-AT-THE-DOOR/)).



THE SURVIVAL OF KING MITHRIDATES

□ TONY HOLLER / □ DECEMBER 17, 2016 /

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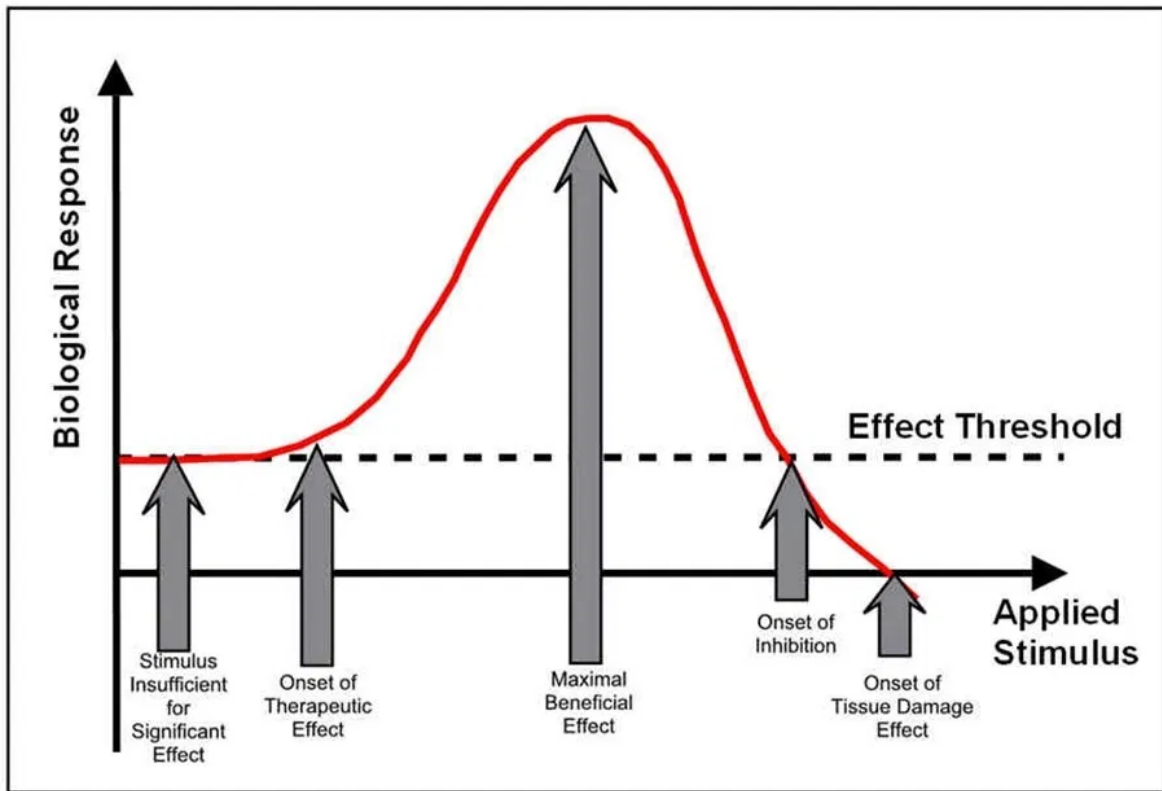
Mithridates VI, also known as Eupator Dionysius, ruled Pontus (in modern-day Turkey) from 120-63 BC. He was known as one of Rome's most formidable enemies.

The father of Mithridates VI (King Mithridates V) had died of poisoning (probably coming from his wife). Suspecting his mother favored his brother, Mithridates VI believed he, like his father, would die of poisoning.

Facing assassination, Mithridates fled into the wild and began ingesting non-lethal amounts of every poison known to man. When Mithridates returned to his kingdom he was immune to all poisons. The rest is history.

Mithridatism has scientific credibility. In biology, there is a phenomenon known as hormesis. *Hormesis is the beneficial effect of ingesting low doses of toxic substances.*

“For every substance, small doses stimulate, moderate doses inhibit, large doses kill.” – Hugo Schulz (1888)

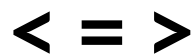


“Everything is a poison, nothing is a poison, it all depends on the dosage.” – Paracelsus (1493-1541)

Minimum effective dose is not just a pharmacological term. Dosage is central to athletic training. The art of coaching is knowing when enough is enough. Referring to the graph above & below, you want to get athletes to the peak, *not the valley after the peak*. When in doubt, less is more (and we are always in doubt!).

< = >

There is no debate. Injury and illness are products of high-volume intensity. Performances suffer when athletes are over-trained. Nervous systems crash when overloaded. Beaten and battered athletes lose their love of sport.



Despite the wealth of training information at our fingertips, coaches continue to pound their athletes. Tom Thibodeau might be the best basketball coach in the world but he got fired from the Chicago Bulls because he failed to understand Mithridates, Paracelsus, and Schulz. On the other hand, Gregg Popovich of the San Antonio Spurs has become a beacon of light in a coaching world of darkness.

HOW DOES “LESS IS MORE” TRAINING WORK?

I receive emails daily from parents and coaches I've never met. The questions are usually about speed training and almost always involve inquiries concerning volume of training. My ideas about speed training are simple and seem to make sense. More important, my system is reproducible.

However, there is one question always asked, “How can you be good in the 400 without ever running more than a 200 in practice?”. The answer is, of course, **minimum effective dose**. We train at 100 mph so that 80 mph feels comfortable. We build a **speed reserve**. Training at high-speed with correct sprint mechanics allow us to long-sprint *without wobble*. We do **lactate workouts** to become chemically tough and allow our bodies to sprint farther.

What are lactate workouts? Well-trained athletes can stay alactic for around ten seconds, then glycolysis kicks in (**lactate is the by-product of glycolysis**). Well-trained athletes can continue to sprint for another 30-60 seconds, then glycolysis shuts down due to its own pollution (acidosis). Anyone who has tried to sprint the 400 knows the pain of glycolytic shutdown. There are no tough guys when muscles lock up.

Last year we did nine lactate workouts. You read that right, we only did nine hard workouts! In our defense, we consider meets lactate workouts too. All other days are either alactic training or rest, recovery, regeneration, & growth. Alactic training is high intensity work of around five seconds followed by enough rest to repeat the same level of intensity. If I worked with my athletes year-round, nine months of the year would be 100% alactic training. Speed and explosion (sprinting and jumping) would be the simple goals of the entire off-season.

Distance runners run fast enough to get to the “lactate threshold” but must stay on the aerobic side of that threshold in order to continue running long distances. Training to run relatively fast without going anaerobic is the Holy Grail of the endurance athlete. Lactate lives in the kingdom of sprinters, not distance runners.

THE SCIENCE

Glycolysis is the anaerobic splitting of glucose molecules to provide ATP for muscles. For you chemists out there:

Glucose → Pyruvic Acid → Pyruvate + Hydrogen Ions → Lactic Acid → Lactate + Hydrogen Ions

Lactate in the blood is measurable. Lactate gets converted to glucose by the liver. Anaerobic work is quantified by measuring blood lactate. Lactate is the byproduct of sprinting more than 5-10 seconds. Lactate is not responsible for the miserable side effects of long sprinting. Lactate is not the bad guy, hydrogen ions are.

Hydrogen ions are, by definition, what makes an acid an acid. Sprinting 400 meters will result in acidosis. Acidosis is what keeps a 400 runner from sprinting another lap at the same speed. Acidosis shuts down glycolysis. Acidosis will make a sprinter feel sick ... gasping for air, blurred vision, nausea, pain, and sometimes vomiting.

To keep acidosis from killing us, we breathe hard. Carbonic acid in the blood is being converted to carbon dioxide which, in turn, raises the blood's pH (acidosis is low pH). Some athletes purge acid from the body by throwing up. Eliminating hydrochloric acid from the stomach is not pleasant, but it's a quick fix for acidosis.

“You are not sick, you are acidic.” – my go-to line when seeing the “lactate war-zone” after a tough workout

If lactate workouts are done right, the body learns to tolerate, both mentally and physically, the accompanying acidosis. Our first lactate workout of the year will produce more side effects than the 2nd or 3rd. It's fun to see the improved biochemistry.

MY THREE LACTATE WORKOUTS:

- **23-second drill** – Actually I allow 24 seconds because we do it on a 180m indoor track. We run solo and sprint trying to run as far as possible in 24 seconds. Coaches mark the sprinter's *distance* when the timer hits 24 seconds. After 10 minutes each guy does another 24-second run and we celebrate anyone who can come within five meters of their first effort. That's it, two 24-second runs with 10 minutes rest in-between. Most sprinters will have a total volume of less than 400 meters. My best guys make it past the 200m mark. *If you get four guys over 200 meters, you will medal in the 4x2 at the 3A state meet.* In 2015, we had six guys over 200m. In 2016, we had eleven. We placed 4th in 2015, 5th in 2016.
- **4x4 Predictor** – sprinters will run 3 x 200 with fly starts, with the wind. Sprinters will walk across the football field diagonally to begin the next 200. The rest will be only 3 minutes. The times are added together then multiplied by .67. I then add 2.0 seconds to the product. These calculated times are recorded, ranked, and **published** (https://docs.google.com/document/d/1HZLjf1SL2rsUJIXeZANBHmNPWO_9-DW_1pjckAULE0E/edit?usp=sharing). The times will accurately reflect the 4x4 speed of each sprinter. Once again, lactate levels get relatively high and sprinters must run fast regardless. This drill also teaches the idea of long sprinting. My cues are always “fast & loose” or “make it look easy”.
- **Critical Zone** – sprinters will run a 200 with a fly start, fast & loose at goal 400 pace (If goal is 48.0, 200 time should be 24.0). With only 45 seconds rest, sprinters will run another fly-200 at the same goal pace. With 8 minutes rest (longer if necessary), sprinters will repeat the 200/200. This is *massive* sprint workout. Some years where the 4x4 is not our focus, I do this as a 200/100, eight minutes, repeat 200/100. Kahmari Montgomery is a world-class athlete, SEC 400 champ as a freshman indoors and outdoors. Kahmari was coached by Jon Pereiro at Plainfield Central and *the critical zone workout was done only once.* Jon understood minimum effective dose.

< = >

FREQUENCY OF LACTATE WORKOUTS?

- If we have two meets in a week, we do zero lactate work in practice.
- If we have one meet, we do one lactate workout (sometimes none).
- If we have no meets, we do one lactate workout.
- In the off-season, we never do a lactate workout.

Notice that we don't ever do a sprint of more than 200m in a practice session. No 300's. No 400's. No laps. *I refuse to confuse the nervous system of a sprinter by allowing slow running.*

Notice that our *total sprint volume* is typically 400 to 600 meters on our hardest days.

But how about the 400? How about the 4x4?

Trust me, my teams will always be competitive in the 4x4. Last year we had eight guys split 48.8, 49.4, 51.4, 51.4, 51.5, 51.8, 52.5, and 52.7. The guy who ran 52.7 was a freshman, Anthony Capezio. Anthony ran the open 400 in 52.46. My 4x4 teams have won state medals 15 times in the last 25 years.

Mithridates, Paracelsus, and Schulz would be proud of Plainfield North's sprint training. **Minimum Effect Dose.**

EMAIL FROM TEXAS

This week I got an email from a concerned father from over 1000 miles away.

+++

Coach,

I ran across your article Teaching Science and Coaching Sprinters on freelapusa.com and what you had to say on acidosis in track athletes.

My daughter is a young sprinter and we have been through the ringer trying to address an issue she has been having.

She is a 100m, 200m and LJ athlete. PR'S of 11.7, 24.8 and 18-2 respectively. She is 5'6 110 pounds. Extremely lean.

We keep having a recurring problem with her vomiting and dizziness after or during her track workouts at her high school in which she is currently a sophomore. She gets sick after running several 100s 200s and 400s etc. It's almost a daily occurrence. We've been working with her doctor and coaches. We've tracked her blood sugar levels before and after workouts. We've paid close attention to diet. We've tried everything. The last episode was two days ago. The school called for me to come get her. She was dizzy, blurry vision, slight headache, nauseated. We went directly to the doctor and the doctor asked what her training was that led to this and my daughter said 10x100's, 4x300's and 4x400's in which she runs like it's the state finals. She is extremely driven. Is this a typical workout? Yes.

The doctor seemed a little upset and said it was greatly over-training, especially for a sprinter like my daughter. We are going Tuesday to Memorial Herman Sports Medicine Center in Houston but I ran across your article and this sounds almost exactly what is happening with her. Have you ever experienced this with any of your kids? Could this be acidosis from extreme training in your opinion?

Any information you might have or could share would be greatly appreciated.

+++

I called this guy and we talked for a long time. The more we talked, the more it became clear. This guy's daughter was being abused in practice. Lactate workouts on top of lactate workouts. Volume out of control. Poison in heavy doses.

The guy said he had spoken to some college coaches about it. I quickly warned him, college coaches are some of the world's worst volume offenders. I cringe when I see crazy college workouts posted on Twitter, especially off-season workouts. Why do so

many track kids peak in high school? Why do so many college track athletes quit the sport? Why are there so many injuries? Almost every college coach won his job by having an athletic resume, not a coaching resume. Sorry for the rant, I should keep my opinions to myself. There really are some great college track coaches out there, but the bad ones give the rest of you a bad name.

I emailed the parent (who will remain anonymous) two more articles, [Record, Rank, & Publish: 8 Weeks of Alactic Training](https://www.freelapusa.com/record-rank-publish-8-weeks-of-alactic-training/) (<https://www.freelapusa.com/record-rank-publish-8-weeks-of-alactic-training/>) and [Inertia and Data-Driven Speed Training](http://itccca.com/6269/2013/12/inertia-and-data-driven-speed-training/) (<http://itccca.com/6269/2013/12/inertia-and-data-driven-speed-training/>) to go along with the article he had found, [Teaching Science and Coaching Sprinters](https://www.freelapusa.com/teaching-science-and-coaching-sprinters/) (<https://www.freelapusa.com/teaching-science-and-coaching-sprinters/>).

The next day, the guy told me the doctor had read the articles and agreed with the acidosis theory.

If you are wondering what is going to happen to the sophomore sprinter, the father told me the doctor will get involved. Future workouts will be limited. Yes, I know, some of you are grinding your teeth. *"No doctor is going to write my workouts!"* Well, maybe you need step out of the dark and into the light. Maybe you should focus on the health and well-being of your sprinters. Maybe there's more to track than grueling workouts and getting kids sick. Maybe Mithridates, Paracelsus, and Schulz knew what they were talking about.

"For every substance, small doses stimulate, moderate does inhibit, large doses kill."


Mithridates survived and became king. Will your sprinters survive and become champions?

Tony Holler
tony.holler@yahoo.com
630-849-8294

Addendum: I know it's early on a Saturday morning, but if you are interested in hearing more about practice planning and sprint volumes, consider attending my 8:00 am (yes 8:00 in the morning, still can't believe they did that to me!) presentation at the


ITCCCA Clinic, Saturday, January 14th. The presentation is called “Feed the Cats: 19 Weeks of Training”.

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COMMENTS ⁷



BOBBYHOLLAND

[DECEMBER 17, 2016 AT 10:28 AM \(HTTP://ITCCCA.COM/12626/2016/12/THE-SURVIVAL-OF-KING-MITHRIDATES/#COMMENT-59687\)](http://ITCCCA.COM/12626/2016/12/THE-SURVIVAL-OF-KING-MITHRIDATES/#COMMENT-59687)

We have seven weeks before our first meet. These is my daily workout themes. What would you change?

M – starts/acceleration (ex 10x20s)

T – tempo endurance (8x200s 70%)

W – Max Velocity (Flys, In&Outs)

Th – Rest

F – Lactate

Pretty sure you’ll say Tuesday. But how to change?

Thanks. You are the man.

[Reply □ \(http://itccca.com/12626/2016/12/the-survival-of-king-mithridates/?replytocom=59687#respond\)](http://itccca.com/12626/2016/12/the-survival-of-king-mithridates/?replytocom=59687#respond)



post
author

TONY HOLLER

([HTTP://WWW.PNTRACK.COM](http://www.pntrack.com))

DECEMBER 17, 2016 AT 11:14 AM ([HTTP://ITCCCA.COM/12626/2016/12/THE-SURVIVAL-OF-KING-MITHRIDATES/#COMMENT-59688](http://itccca.com/12626/2016/12/the-survival-of-king-mithridates/#comment-59688))

I'm really low-volume. Korfist makes me look like an old-school guy.

I would change Tuesday to an X-Factor day. Plyos, hurdle mobility, and new things. I would do X-Factor again on Friday instead of lactate. The earliest I would start lactate would be three weeks prior to first competition.

For more about what we do before the competitive season, go to <https://www.freelapusa.com/record-rank-publish-8-weeks-of-alactic-training/> (<https://www.freelapusa.com/record-rank-publish-8-weeks-of-alactic-training/>).

In addition, I think it's important to take serious time off somewhere in mid-season. Spring break works for us. We have 8 weeks of competitive indoor, spring break (10 days, no practice for sprinters), then 8 weeks of competitive outdoor. You can't pound sprinters for three consecutive months.

These are just my ideas. They have worked for me and worked for dozens of other programs. I continue to question everything. Like all coaches, I'm haunted with doubts (especially concerning the weight room!).

Thanks for your interest. Wish I was enjoying your Texas weather.

Tomorrow night we are expecting -19 for a low.

Reply □ (<http://itccca.com/12626/2016/12/the-survival-of-king-mithridates/?replytocom=59688#respond>)



BOBBY HOLLAND

DECEMBER 17, 2016 AT 1:37 PM ([HTTP://ITCCCA.COM/12626/2016/12/THE-SURVIVAL-OF-KING-MITHRIDATES/#COMMENT-59690](http://itccca.com/12626/2016/12/the-survival-of-king-mithridates/#comment-59690))

Thanks coach. When in doubt, less is more and don't run slowly.

Our big issue in Texas for boys is how to account for what they do in off-season football weights right before coming out to the track.

Also, Dallas is supposed to drop from a high of 71 to a low of 21 today!

[Reply □ \(http://itcca.com/12626/2016/12/the-survival-of-king-mithridates/?replytocom=59690#respond\)](http://itcca.com/12626/2016/12/the-survival-of-king-mithridates/?replytocom=59690#respond)



BOBBY HOLLAND

[JANUARY 6, 2017 AT 9:34 AM \(HTTP://ITCCA.COM/12626/2016/12/THE-SURVIVAL-OF-KING-MITHRIDATES/#COMMENT-60285\)](http://ITCCA.COM/12626/2016/12/THE-SURVIVAL-OF-KING-MITHRIDATES/#COMMENT-60285)

Will that plan work for the 400 sprinters? I'm worried they won't be able to finish races without that endurance base.

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post author

TONY HOLLER **(HTTP://WWW.PNTRACK.COM)**

[JANUARY 6, 2017 AT 11:50 AM \(HTTP://ITCCA.COM/12626/2016/12/THE-SURVIVAL-OF-KING-MITHRIDATES/#COMMENT-60289\)](http://ITCCA.COM/12626/2016/12/THE-SURVIVAL-OF-KING-MITHRIDATES/#COMMENT-60289)

Bobby,

I understand your concern but trust me, it works. My "Feed the Cats" speed training has been implemented in dozens of programs and all of them have been successful in the 4x4. My teams have brought home state medals in the 4x4 15 times in the past 25 years. The efficiency created by training fast and the "freshness" of runners trained in low volumes adds up to good 400 runners and good 4x4 teams.

Last year we had eight guys split 48.8, 49.4, 51.4, 51.4, 51.5, 51.8, 52.5, and 52.7. The guy who ran 52.7 was a freshman, Anthony Capezio. Anthony ran the open 400 in 52.46.

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BOBBY HOLLAND

JANUARY 6, 2017 AT 12:18 PM (HTTP://ITCCCA.COM/12626/2016/12/THE-SURVIVAL-OF-KING-MITHRIDATES/#COMMENT-60290)

Thanks, coach. I needed that re-assurance. It's a radical change. The kids are liking it, though.



BEN EDWARDS

SEPTEMBER 26, 2017 AT 2:37 AM (HTTP://ITCCCA.COM/12626/2016/12/THE-SURVIVAL-OF-KING-MITHRIDATES/#COMMENT-67154)

Fantastic info here, thanks for sharing it, Tony!

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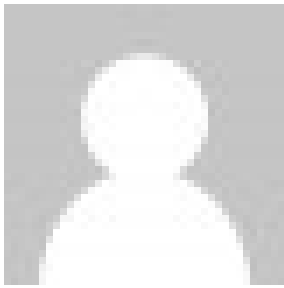


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- To promote, publicize, and recognize achievement of our area athletes and coaches.
- To request the feelings of schools, coaches, and athletes of our area on rule changes, administration of track and cross-country meets to the IHSA. We strive to provide a voice representing the needs and interests of Northern Illinois in any decisions regarding track and cross-country in the state of Illinois.
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☐ **NEWS - IL HS XC WEEK IN REVIEW - SEPTEMBER 6, 2020**

(https://ILXCTF.RUNNERSPACE.COM/PROFILE.PHP?MEMBER_ID=42240)

[MEMBER_ID=42240&DO=NEWS&NEWS_ID=607858-IL-HS-XC-WEEK-IN-REVIEW-SEPTEMBER-6-2020](#))

SEPTEMBER 6, 2020

NEWS - FUN WITH STATS: WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN IN 2020

[\(HTTPS://ILXCTF.RUNNERSPACE.COM/PROFILE.PHP?](https://ilxctf.runnerspace.com/profile.php?MEMBER_ID=42240&DO=NEWS&NEWS_ID=607737-FUN-WITH-STATS-WHAT-MIGHT-HAVE-BEEN-IN-2020)

[MEMBER_ID=42240&DO=NEWS&NEWS_ID=607737-FUN-WITH-STATS-WHAT-MIGHT-HAVE-BEEN-IN-2020](#))

SEPTEMBER 4, 2020

NEWS - THE ILLINOIS HS XC JOURNAL - SEPTEMBER 3, 2020

[\(HTTPS://ILXCTF.RUNNERSPACE.COM/PROFILE.PHP?](https://ilxctf.runnerspace.com/profile.php?MEMBER_ID=42240&DO=NEWS&NEWS_ID=607678-THE-ILLINOIS-HS-XC-JOURNAL-SEPTEMBER-3-2020)

[MEMBER_ID=42240&DO=NEWS&NEWS_ID=607678-THE-ILLINOIS-HS-XC-JOURNAL-SEPTEMBER-3-2020](#))

SEPTEMBER 2, 2020

NEWS - IL HS XC WEEK IN REVIEW - AUGUST 30, 2020

[\(HTTPS://ILXCTF.RUNNERSPACE.COM/PROFILE.PHP?](https://ilxctf.runnerspace.com/profile.php?MEMBER_ID=42240&DO=NEWS&NEWS_ID=607638-IL-HS-XC-WEEK-IN-REVIEW-AUGUST-30-2020)

[MEMBER_ID=42240&DO=NEWS&NEWS_ID=607638-IL-HS-XC-WEEK-IN-REVIEW-AUGUST-30-2020](#))

AUGUST 30, 2020

[\(HTTP://IL.MILESPLIT.COM/RSS/ARTICLES\)](http://il.milesplit.com/rss/articles), **MILESPLIT IL**
 [\(HTTPS://IL.MILESPLIT.COM/ARTICLES\)](https://il.milesplit.com/articles)

DREW ROGERS EARNS WEEK #2 BOYS ATHLETE OF THE WEEK

[\(HTTPS://IL.MILESPLIT.COM/ARTICLES/285406-DREW-ROGERS-EARNS-WEEK-2-BOYS-ATHLETE-OF-THE-WEEK\)](https://il.milesplit.com/articles/285406-drew-rogers-earns-week-2-boys-athlete-of-the-week)

SEPTEMBER 7, 2020

More than 300 voters casted their right to name a boys AOW

TOEING THE LINE: 2020 CROSS COUNTRY VIBES WEEK 2

[\(HTTPS://IL.MILESPLIT.COM/ARTICLES/285382-TOEING-THE-LINE-2020-CROSS-COUNTRY-VIBES-WEEK-2\)](https://il.milesplit.com/articles/285382-toeing-the-line-2020-cross-country-vibes-week-2)

SEPTEMBER 7, 2020

The cross country season is picking up as a ton of top action happened all around the state

YORKVILLE BOYS AND GIRLS BREEZE AGAINST OSWEGO EAST IN DUAL

[\(HTTPS://IL.MILESPLIT.COM/ARTICLES/285383-YORKVILLE-BOYS-AND-GIRLS-](https://il.milesplit.com/articles/285383-yorkville-boys-and-girls-)

BREEZE-AGAINST-OSWEGO-EAST-IN-DUAL).

SEPTEMBER 7, 2020

Dual meets are becoming vogue this season, it's an opportunity to see the intimate part of the sport

□ **VOTE THE BOYS ATHLETE OF THE WEEK #2: 8/30-9/5**

(HTTPS://IL.MILESPLIT.COM/ARTICLES/285362-VOTE-THE-BOYS-ATHLETE-OF-THE-WEEK-2-830-95).

SEPTEMBER 6, 2020

Week 2 had some tremendous performances that you can't deny!

HALL OF FAME (HTTP://ITCCCA.COM/HALL-OF-FAME/).

JAN. CLINIC (HTTP://ITCCCA.COM/JANUARY-CLINIC/).

NEWS AND BLOGS (HTTP://ITCCCA.COM/NEWS-AND-BLOGS/).



(https://www.facebook.com/itccca)



(https://twitter.com/itccca)