

## **Bad Days**

Running is constantly an exercise in patience. This is no more so the case than when workouts or training cycles meet poor performances. Having a strategy to make training modifications when training doesn't go according to plan will get your training back on track in short order.

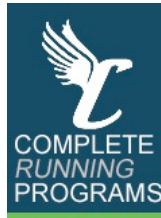
**Prevention:** The first step in avoiding poor workout performances or training slumps is to be organized. Often these bad days are a result of spreading yourself too thin and neglecting proper nutrition or recovery. Plan ahead for when you are going to workout, eat and rest as well as the logistics of your training locations, travel and coordination of essential training partners. Addressing these common sense tasks will reduce poor workout frequency.

**Identify the challenge:** Often runners meet their best intentions in a workout with times below their goal performance or with a state of abnormally high effort to achieve the prescribed workout times. Identify what is causing your rough patch that day. If your goal times are based on realistic estimations of your current fitness you should be able to narrow it down quickly and doing so helps affect a positive medium term change. A poor nights sleep and lousy or skipped meals? Did you hammer your recovery run the day before? Are you amidst a severe increase in mileage? Determine what is likely the cause of your bad day and make a choice.

The choices:

**Modify** – Often when a workouts underlying goal is to add a general aerobic or muscular resistance (as is often the case in early to mid season training) they can easily be modified to accommodate a rough session and still constitute the same effect with more manageable pieces. Ex: An athlete struggling with a 4 mile tempo run 1.5 miles into it might see significantly slowing speeds for the splits on the second mile. A good modification would be to break up the tempo after 2 miles and take a short rest and resume in 1 mile segments. A similar training effect is achieved and a greater sense of achievement is obtained than struggling with a weak performance over a continuous 4 miles.

**Reschedule** - If you workout is truly a 'key' workout that is intended to be predictive of a near future race performance or is a simulation for an upcoming race, you may want to make the call to amend or reschedule your workout early in the session. Doing so should be reserved for only the most important workouts where the derived confidence from this workout is at a premium. Consider bagging the session to give you 24-48 hours to reschedule.



Cancel – If a session is shaping up to be particularly poor after giving it a reasonable chance to right itself, and this has occurred three or more times to you in the last 3 weeks, you need to cancel and reevaluate your training, goals and lifestyle. It happens to the best athletes. In 2008, Olympian [Anthony Famiglietti](#) found himself with a string of poor workouts and chronic fatigue. He attributed this extreme downturn in performance to his unique [diet](#) of pizza and junkfood. Address your situation thoroughly and immediately and develop a plan to correct your training errors.

Caveat- Carefully consider changing your workout plans mid workout, especially if you don't have the consultation of a coach or advisor. It can be emotionally frustrating to miss the sense of accomplishment that comes with the completion of a workout and this can hound you in future training and racing. If you do modify, reschedule or cancel, do so with confidence and stick firmly to your choice.

Although 'Bad Days' happen, they don't have to define your training or reduce you to questioning your ability. Take a systematic and analytical approach to mitigating these challenging workouts and you'll be back to strong performances quickly.

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