

weeks and months to compete in and win a race six weeks later.

What I am going to do is give you the guidelines I work by and share my training philosophies.

The Six Elements

I believe that there are six elements of athlete performance enhancement. These are shown in Table 1, along with examples of what they entail.

“ There is no ‘perfect’ build-up, as so many unforeseen things can happen. The important thing is not to get upset or lose motivation when they do. ”

Training Plan

Below are the steps I use in planning an athlete’s periodisation for a season:

1. Fix your goals

First, establish your goals. I use three types of goal: A, B & C goals.

A goals are your major goals for the season. You should have no more than three A goals per season – for example, reaching your top club team, making county selection and winning a regional tournament.

B goals are goals that lead you up to your A goals, such as performing

well in a ‘warm-up’ tournament or your county selection trials.

C goals are less important in terms of the ranking sheets or the trophy cabinet but are important to your performance level and should be designed to keep you focused during the training months. Goals can include improving your fitness or a specific stroke, for example.

2. Colour your goals

On the wall above the computer in my office is a huge calendar that displays all the days the year. On it (in non-permanent ink) I have filled in my A goals with a red pen, my B goals with a blue pen and my C goals with a green pen. Then, with a black pen, I mark my training periods and finally with an orange pen my rest periods. This makes it easier for me to see exactly where I am and what I have coming up.

3. Plan around your goals

Given that your A goals are the most important, you need to make sure that you are well prepared and well rested before you perform. You must therefore plan around them.

Table 2 shows an example of how to plan a training schedule leading up to a major tournament. I like to use a six-week training period, as it helps the athlete to stay focused on the goal and not become overtrained or mentally tired.

You will notice that I plan it

backwards, i.e. starting from the goal (Week 6) and finishing with Week 1. Following the six-week block of training and the competition itself is usually a period of rest and evaluation.

Periodisation Summary

1. Define your A, B and C goals.
2. Add colour to your goals and see them daily.
3. Plan around your goals.
4. Work in six-week blocks, planning backwards.
5. Be flexible in your planning; things happen.
6. Listen to your body and include rest periods.

4. Be flexible

I am not just referring to stretching the hamstrings here; I am talking about being ready to change your plan from time to time. As I mentioned earlier, things like illness and injury can set you back, forcing you to re-shuffle your tournament programme and therefore your training schedule.

I tell my athletes that there is no ‘perfect’ build-up, as so many unforeseen things can happen. The important thing is not to get upset or lose motivation when they do. Expect them and be prepared to move onto your Plan B like a champion.

Table 2

Week	Squash focus	Training focus	Training
6	Tournament begins	Use your warm-ups on court to feel good and get into the zone	Light cardio (e.g. spinning on a stationary bike) Prehab Recuperation
5	Match play, playing points with good recovery in between	Training sessions are shorter, BUT more intense	SAQ (2 sessions) Prehab & Core (3 sessions) Strength (1 session) Recuperation
4	Match play, playing points with a variety of opponents	Some drills and specifics	SAQ (3 sessions) Prehab & Core (3 sessions) Strength (1–2 sessions) Recuperation
3	Drills and conditioning games	Focus on specific elements of your game and some tactics	SAQ (3 sessions) Prehab & Core (3 sessions) Strength (2–3 sessions) Recuperation
2	Drills	Focus on technique and increase the intensity	Strength (3 sessions) SAQ (2–3 sessions) Prehab & Core (2 sessions) X-T (1–2 sessions) Recuperation
1	Technique and drills	Focus on your swing and hitting the ball at specific targets; no intensity	X-T (3–4 sessions) Strength (2–3 sessions) Prehab & Core (2 sessions) SAQ (1 session) Recuperation