
Train With Iwan Thomas. . . If You Dare

While in Ireland over the summer, I picked up a copy of Athletics Weekly, the well-known British magazine on track and field. This article gives an inkling into the arduous training of a world class 400m runner. Call AW's subscription hotline in England for more information: 01858 438 823. The article was from the July 28, 1999 issue.

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Iwan Thomas won British AAA, European, Commonwealth and World Cup 400m titles in 1999. Here's how he did it . . .

The schedule where only the sensible survive.

TYPICAL WEEK IN THE WINTER

Monday: Weights.
Tuesday: Hills and one hour of indoor flexibility and power exercises.
Wednesday: Sand dunes or woods.
Thursday: Medicine ball work and circuits.
Friday: Weights.
Saturday: After Christmas on the track/ before Christmas rest.
Sunday: Sand dunes.

TYPICAL WEEK IN THE SUMMER

Monday: Track session with long recoveries e.g., 3x200m.

Tuesday: Runs on cricket pitch. e.g., 4x250m (5min. recovery).

Wednesday: Track session. e.g., 3x300m (8-10min. recovery).

Thursday: Blocks and bend running.

Friday: Weights if not racing.

Saturday: Rest.

Sunday: Drills and "bits and pieces."

Weights: "I hardly ever do any leg weights as my legs are usually recovering from the dune and woods sessions," Thomas says. "It's all upper body work (bench press, upright rowing, lat pull-downs and sit-ups). It's generally an easy day—as I often slack, 'coz Mike (Smith, his coach) isn't there. For sit-ups for example, I won't do many. Say five sets of 30."

This year Thomas got an individual weights coach for the first time, a local fitness instructor, which he feels has (or rather had) helped him.

Basketball: Thomas plays basketball as a "warm-down" after his Thursday session during the winter. He calls this his "highlight of the week."

Circuits: Bounding is an important part of the work Thomas does in the gym—much of which is done with a weighted jacket.

His Thursday night winter sessions last about one and a half hours.

Off-track running sessions: On Wednesdays and Sundays during the winter Thomas runs off-road sessions in the woods or on sand dunes.

His sessions in Telegraph Woods in Southampton might, for example, consist of 15-20 runs of varying distance with varying recoveries.

Whereas coach Smith has sessions planned beforehand, they might change slightly depending on various factors, "such as people not working hard enough," Thomas jokes.

The length of reps vary between one minute 28 seconds to just 15 seconds. "We also run relays and paarlaufs," says Thomas.

Dune sessions take place at three different venues with a single run sometimes (although rarely) being as long as one and half miles.

From Athletics Weekly

Thomas also points to the “figure eight” which is about one kilometer in length with an uphill finish on sand.

Group: Thomas’s training partners include: Peter Brend, Michael Parper, Lee Fairclough, Simon Ciaravella, Chris Bennett and the group’s star basketball player Tim O’Dell.

Favorite sessions: Split 200s. Here Thomas runs two 200s with just a minute recovery in between. The aim is to beat your 400m PB, so Thomas

would run, say, 21.8 and then 22.0. Then, after 15 minutes’ recovery, he would try and do it again.

Another favorite is 500m, 400m, 300m, 200m, 100m with a reducing recovery of 12,10 and 8 minutes (or 10, 8 and 6 minutes in the summer). There is no rest after the 200m, the group going straight into the 100m ‘stride’.

Thomas remembers running this session particularly well in Portugal during a preseason training spell when

he had a bet with Anthony Whiteman to see who could run the session the quickest.

Thomas began with a 68-second 500m, then ran 48, 34 and a low 22 although he adds it’s so long since he ran a track session he struggles to remember what times he runs for them.

“It’s the kind of session where 10 might start and three finish,” he says. “Some in the group might go for it in the 500m but then really pay for it. It’s a session where the sensible survive.”