



CITIUS ALTIUS FORTIUS

Written by Jay LaValley, 10/15/2010



The Latin phrase means faster, higher, stronger and is referred to as the Olympic Games creed and the winning spirit of an athlete. Athletes push themselves to become better athletes. It builds character to push and conquer instead of giving up when the going gets tough not only in athletics, but when life itself puts up a roadblock. From this idea, I developed a list of fifteen of my most difficult/favorite workouts of all time. I use difficult and favorite together because as an athlete, they go hand in hand. When you can push through a tough workout, it often makes the most difficult things in daily life very easy and simple, and you want to do the workout again, but even faster, higher, stronger.

Having a benchmark to measure your success from is very useful as an athlete and coach. Measuring progress in running is time oriented; you run a workout this week and the same next week but it's faster, you know you're in better shape. Wrestling is much different and often times running is what wrestlers resort to, to measure fitness, but also the use of complex weight training as well as traditional lifting can gauge an increase of strength and or endurance, specific to wrestling. A good drill partner can help you measure technical aspects that seem unmeasurable.

Most of the workouts listed are running, however the same mentality, focus, and intensity was required in all of them, regardless of what sport it was. Running and wrestling are probably the two most challenging and difficult sports on the face of the planet, having done pretty much every other sport when I was younger. They're so difficult that of course they're not the most attractive sports to participate in, but that's the beauty of them and why they're Olympic sports. Anyone with a passion, work ethic, and a mental capacity to push beyond what they thought otherwise they're capable of can succeed. Remember, someone before me probably did these same workouts and someone will after me, but faster, higher, stronger.

15. Spring 2005 (age 27)- Mile in 4:34, 4 min jog, 1200 meters (3/4 mile) in 3:12, 3 min jog, 800 meters (half mile) in 2:09, 2 min jog, 400 meters (quarter mile) :61. This workout is called the MICHIGAN, designed by former University of Michigan Cross Country/Track coach Ron Warhurst. The mile time was only 7 seconds off my fastest and the 1200 was a personal best.

14. Fall 2005 (age 28)- Trained at Boston University with World Medalist Carl Adam's wrestling team, then ran 7 miles up hill on the Boston Marathon course in reverse to join the Reebok team run a workout around the reservoir at Boston College, 2x10 minutes at 5:20 pace. My legs felt exhausted but it was great knowing I could put in as much work as I did, all quality work too.

13. Summer 1990 (age 13)- Carrying a 70 pound backpack through the arduous and rocky terrain of the White Mountains of New Hampshire was a challenge to say the least. My friends and I reached our final destination very accomplished traversing over 65 miles and after 5 days, relieved that it was over. Weary beyond belief, I summonsed enough energy to realize that I forgot my camera at a water stop about 3 miles back. Priceless snapshots of the excursion and proof of the summits we conquered may be gone! Immediately I took my backpack off, dashed back on the trail with blazing speed, hoping that one, the camera was still there, and two, my friends wouldn't leave without me. About 35 minutes later, I returned, camera in hand and relishing in glory (for the second time) that it was finally over.

12. Spring 2008 (age 31)- 245lb bench press, 405lb squat, 405lb deadlift, 245lb clean and press, all max lifts done in one day weighing around 155lbs. This was all done at the end of my regular lifting workout which was a pyramid of reps in bench press, squat, deadlift, and clean and press, all starting at 8 reps, 6 reps, 4 reps, 2 reps, 1 rep.

11. Winter 2004 (age 27)- 22 miles on treadmill in 2 hours 14 minutes with a finishing heart rate around 140bpm! While living in Boston and dealing with terrible frigid cold snowy winters, I had to get creative with my training. I hated taking a day off from training and often times resorted to running in various parking garages around the city, but sometimes braved the harsh conditions, knowing it would only make me tougher. One day it was so bad outside, I ran 22 miles on a treadmill. Immediately, I loved it and it became my staple Monday run that winter. Generally, most treadmills are incorrectly calibrated due to wear and tear overtime. The deviation is roughly 20 seconds slower than what it reads. That means I still would have run my fastest 22 miler on the treadmill in 2:21 (6:25 pace) or 2:47 marathon if I continued 4.2 more miles.

10. Winter 2001 (age 24)- Having only run about :54.5 seconds in the quarter mile (equals 400 meters) in high school, I never thought I could go much faster until I ran :49.5 seconds in college. My first year with Reebok, our coach Bob Sevene (Sev) got the most out of our speed and had us do 4x400 meters indoors. There was 10 minutes recovery between each one, everything done with racing spikes on, so I knew it was going to be fast, but I wasn't quite expecting the first one to be :54.0. I also wasn't sure how my body was going to feel over the next 3, but Sev knew exactly what he was doing with us and we ended up running the next 2 in :53.4, :52.7. I ran my last one in :51.1 and a couple of my teammates ran under :50, but I was just happy to run each one consecutively faster.

- 9. Summer 1994 (age 17)-** I was about to enter my senior year of high school and was getting ready for the upcoming cross country season. I wanted to win everything, as the year before I was undefeated in dual meets and placed 7th in the state meet. To achieve my goal, I knew I needed to train myself harder than I did the year before and a staple workout of mine was 5x1 mile. For this particular workout, the goal was to run under 5:05 for each mile with only 1 minute recovery jogs between. I always preferred to run my workouts alone, and seemed to thrive off of knowing that I was the only one who could slow me down or go faster. All were run under 5:05, but the last two ended up under 5 minutes. Later finished 2nd in the state meet.
- 8. Spring 2005 (age 27)-** Ran my fastest 20 miler ever in 1:55:15, passing 13 miles in 1:14:45, which was surprising, but kept the pace hot and felt it over last mile. Average mile pace was roughly 5:45 around the historic cobblestone streets of Boston.
- 7. Summer 1993 (age 16)-** Biked to Hampton Beach, NH (15 miles across state border) and raced a 5k (3.1 miles) in 17:04 then started biking afterward. Only got a few miles down the road and one of my high school teachers who also ran the race stopped me and asked if I wanted a ride. He thought I was going to my house in Massachusetts, but I told him I was biking to another 5k race and to drop me off there. I ran 17:46 at that one and then biked home 10 more miles.
- 6. Fall 1999 (age 22)-** Entering my senior year of college, I wanted to make a mark in cross country. Despite the fact cross country was my favorite sport in high school, the transition from the high school 3.1 mile distance to the collegiate distance of 5 miles was horrible. Going into the season, my best 5 mile run collegiately was 26:13, not very fast considering I had run 27 minutes in high school for 5 miles. One particular workout stands out in my mind which helped me change all of that. The workout was 2x2 miles with a 7 minute recovery jog between. I didn't really know what to expect out of this workout, because I had never done one like this before. Mentally, I went into it wanting to run all out and knew it was going to hurt like hell but I didn't care. I ran my fastest 2 mile ever 9:58 and then the second one, ran even faster in 9:55. I surprised myself but knew I had it in me all along, but also knew that I was ready to run fast over 5 miles. Two weeks later I ran 25:38.
- 5. Fall 2006 (age 29)-** Ran 6.5 miles to St. Pauls (in Maryland), virtually all uphill from my apartment and then wrestled with Alex Meade (now at Oklahoma State University) with none other than Cary Kolat leading the way. Alex was only 16 at the time, however he was ranked #1 in the country and I only weighed about 145lbs with him about 165lbs. We wrestled for a good 60 minutes, mostly live. I ran home 6.5 miles, this time thankfully, all downhill.
- 4. Winter 2004 (age 27)-** Often times I entered competitions and used them as workouts or tune ups or just to see where I was in my training. All of my fastest times were run indoors and at the age of 27, was still able to run 8:55, my fastest time for 3000 meters (equivalent to roughly 9:30 2 miles). Just 30 minutes later, ran the half mile in 1:59.
- 3. Winter 2000 (age 23)-** This was another competition that I treated like a workout, which always took an insurmountable amount of pressure off to perform better. Ran the Eastern Conference Athletic Conference Indoor 800 meter race and finished first in 1:54.1 which qualified me for the NAAs. Just 40 minutes later, ran on the 4x800 meter relay and ran an all time best 1:52.9. Prior to the first race, my coach told me that I had nothing to lose and went out and ran like it.
- 2. Spring 2010 (age 33)-** Coming in at #2 (surprisingly) nearly 10 years after #3, is a workout at Oregon Ridge in preparation for a freestyle wrestling competition. Actually did this workout once a week for a month leading up to the competition. Anyone who has seen Oregon Ridge knows it's an old ski area, but what they don't know is that it gains about 400 feet in elevation fairly quickly. Got the idea to do this workout from the Olympic Training Center coaches in Colorado who run their wrestlers at the bottom of Pike's Peak, 3x2minutes up and then 3x:30 seconds, recovery is walking down. My first attempt at this workout, could not even make it up without stopping and only made it about 2/3rds of the way up in about 2 minutes. Gradually, I was able to run all the way up to the top in 2 minutes for all 3 of them and then sprint three :30 second goes.
- 1. Summer 2009 (age 32)-** University of Penn wrestler Zach Kemmerer and I decided to do a monster kettlebell workout in mid July outside in some pretty thick and humid weather. Took on 6 complex exercises over 5 sets, but increased the weight and decreased the reps starting from 5 down to 1. The first and last exercises in each set were always 10 reps throughout because they were two handed exercises, but the other 4 exercises were done with one arm all the way thru; then the other arm was done just the same with the first and last exercises always 10 reps. Started with a 24 kilo bell (52.8lbs) on first 2 sets, 28 kilo (61.6lbs) on 3rd and 4th sets, and then with just 1 rep, 32 kilo kettlebell (70.4lbs). After crunching the numbers on a spreadsheet later that day, the totals were staggering...320 reps in about 45 minutes and a grand total of 16,227.2lbs lifted! Kemmerer was slightly lower at 11,706.6lbs.

Pushing hard over the course of 25 plus years is tough, but being consistent makes it that much easier when you need to prepare and compete as an athlete. There's always going to be someone out there training hard with the same passion and desire as you, but are you willing to take the extra step and push yourself faster, higher, stronger?

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