



Pete's PETs: Performance Enhancing Tips: The YTP – Mapping the Year to Peak Performance

“It's not the plan that is important, it's the planning” - Graeme Edwards

Last year at this time, I wrote about the importance of the transition phase in the yearly plan, and focused in on the activities that the athletes should be doing, and that there should be some structure to avoid too much detraining in certain areas. You can read that archive here:

(http://www.canoekayak.ca/files/55/33/The_Coaches_Column_sept7_2010_III.pdf).

I also briefly mentioned the importance of the transition phase to the coach, as a time for rest and regeneration (coaches need to peak too!). However, the transition phase is also a time to reflect on, and evaluate the past years' performances, as well as training programs and training load. Although rest is important, there is definitely a benefit in doing this evaluation earlier than later as the season will hopefully be somewhat fresh in your mind. Taking your reflections and evaluations from the past season, and the goals of the program for the next, it's time to start mapping and planning out your yearly training plan for when your athletes arrive for the first day of fall training.

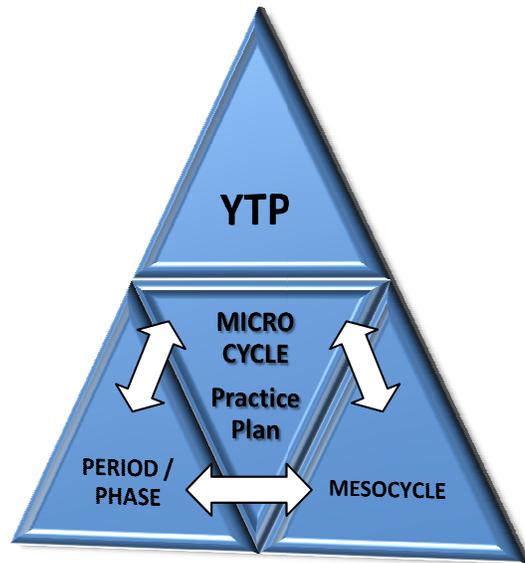
The yearly training plan (YTP) is essentially a *map or roadway* to peak performance at desired times of the year. Depending on the level of the athlete you are working with, this could be 1 (Sprint National championships), or multiple performances (National Team trials, international competition, provincial team trials, National Championships etc). Either way, in order for a peak performance to happen, a plan has to be developed.

Meticulous planning of a practice or training program is one of many hallmarks of coaching expertise (Voss et al, 1983). Expert coaches (vs. non-expert) spend more time planning, and are more precise in their goals and objectives of a (training program), practice or intervention. Having a detailed YTP allows you to answer the questions “What will your focus be in the 3rd week of April, 2012”, “What will you be doing?” As you will see below, that plan can sometimes change or be modified.

In developing the YTP, we quite often emphasize and are tuned to the planning of all the physiological and technical components in the YTP; through the phases, mesocycles, microcycles of the year. However, we need to ensure that these decisions are well thought out and rationalized. Below are a few other factors to consider in developing the YTP that are sometimes overlooked, that hopefully contribute to building a well thought out YTP.

1) Setting the Right Objectives and Goals:

The first, and arguably most crucial step in designing the YTP is setting the goals and objectives for the year. The term or phrase “Backwards Design” is often used when developing the YTP. Everything is planned backwards from when the ultimate objective, or peak performance is to be achieved.



The “YTP” diagram shows the relationship between the YTP, and the phases, mesocycles, microcycles, and even the practices of the year. Goals and objectives in the YTP need to be consistent with, and reflected in the phases, mesocycles, microcycles and practice plans. This is why having short term objectives, or *benchmarks*, is equally important as the long term objectives. These *benchmarks* are the stepping stones to achieving the main objectives for the year, and are a useful tool to monitor how your athletes are progressing to achieve them.

Thinking critically in developing the goals and objectives for the year is crucial and lays the foundation for a good plan. Below are a few factors that should be considered when developing goals and objectives for the season:

- ✓ Age and developmental stage of your athlete(s), what does the LTAD developmental pathway look like?
 - Does your first year midget have the same training objectives as your second year juvenile?
 - What are the critical windows of trainability?
 - Where is your athlete with respect to PHV?
- ✓ What are the demands, or the contributions of different athletic abilities to the events your group is preparing for?
- ✓ Competition focus
 - How many competitions in the year based on the athlete’s developmental stage? What is the training to competition ratio?
- ✓ What are you identifying as major and minor competitions?



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- ✓ Some sort of a gap analysis from the previous year
 - your athlete's performances relative to benchmarks, your expectations
 - athlete's strengths and weaknesses in the athletic abilities required for performance in canoe-kayak.

- ✓ Results and performance analyses (either in race situations or testing) from the previous season

- ✓ For short term goals, where do you want your athlete to be at certain times of the year? (fitness, times for 1000m, 2000m, 6000m, 500m, 200m, etc)?
 - What are the objectives for aerobic capacity following the first mesocycle of the general preparation phase?
 - What are the objectives for a mesocycle during the fall on-water phase (or specific preparation phase)?

When you look at your completed YTP, you need to ensure that your goals and objectives are reflected in your YTP, and reflected in the smaller phases, mesocycles and microcycles. Goals and objectives are the easiest way to monitor and assess if your athletes are on track, or progressing. An easy way to check this is to examine your periodized components, and how their emphasis changes through the year.

2) The YTP is *Dynamic*, not Static

Is the YTP the only map to Peak Performance, or meeting your goals and objectives? What happens if the short term objectives you've set for the end of the fall on-water phase, or first mesocycle of your general preparation phase have not been met? Do you continue on with the plan? Let's revisit the road map analogy for the YTP. Often when driving in a car, the pre-determined route set by a GPS may not be the best option at that time. While stuck in traffic and assessing your progression, you may determine that you need to change your route to get to your destination faster. It is your critical thinking, and knowledge of the area that helps you make those decisions.

The same can be said for the YTP. As a coach, accept that your plan will change at some point during the year. That is the purpose of monitoring and testing your athletes periodically through the year. When you assess your athlete's progression against the short term objectives for various phases of the year, you'll know if you need to modify your YTP based on your athlete's response to the training. Changing or modifying your YTP is *not* a reflection of poor planning, *but of careful monitoring, critical thinking and rationalizing by the coach*. All great coaches do this based on the responses of their athletes to the training load; and not just on a mesocycle to mesocycle basis, but even on a workout to workout basis. The purpose of short term objectives and benchmarks, which should be assessed with testing and monitoring, is to track you athlete's progression. If the YTP and



program you have designed are not meeting expectations, or short term objectives, then a change needs to be made.

For more information on what and when to monitor and assess, check out this presentation from our 2009 CKC Coaches Conference, presented by Leo Thornley:

http://www.canoekayak.ca/files/54/62/Leo_Thornley_Practical_athlete_monitoring_at_the_club_level_Nov_09.pdf

In addition, here is the link to Leo Thornley's presentation from the 2010 CKC Conference in using monitoring information to make change to the training program:

http://www.canoekayak.ca/files/56/10/CKC_Coaches_Conf_2010_Thornley.pdf

3) Get Feedback and Stay Current:

Einstein said the following about Insanity; *“Insanity: Doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results”*. Sometimes coaches can get caught up in their own programs and clubs, and do not reach out to others for feedback, or other new ideas as their athletes progress. In all regions across the country, there are plenty of resources that coaches can go to for support and mentoring. Most Canadian Sport Centers, Universities or colleges have physiologists or strength and conditioning specialists that can work with you to provide some mentoring and support in developing your training programs. There may also be some expert coaches in sports similar to canoe kayak (swimming, track and field, etc) that you can ask for feedback, and compare and contrast your yearly plan with. Don't be afraid to source out these experts to help you, and get constructive feedback. In the process, you will also give those coaches some new ideas as well. Constructive feedback is not meant to demean, but to challenge you to provide rationale for the decisions you make in constructing your program.

In addition, take part in professional development workshops, conferences, online seminars to gain extra knowledge in this area. At the upcoming November 13 – 14th CKC Coaches Conference in Toronto, there will be several presentations regarding junior periodization, effective mesocycle and microcycle planning, strength training, and other topics to help to continue to build a strong program for your junior athletes. We hope to see you there, plan to attend.



NEW ARTICLES ON SIRC

Have you cruised our SIRC CKC aisle lately? Some great new articles have been recently posted, including:

Trent Stellingwerth et al: *Nutrition for Power Sports: Mid-Distance Running, Track cycling, rowing, canoeing/kayaking and swimming.*

Shona L. Halson: *Nutrition, sleep and recovery*

Garcia-Pallares and Izquierdo: *Strategies to Optimize Concurrent Training of Strength and Aerobic Fitness for Rowing and Canoeing*

As always, to submit content to the Coaches Column and our coaching newsletters, email Peter Niedre at pniedre@canoekayak.ca.