

Benchmark Testing And Pacing Charts

Periodically, we will conduct a timed 3k (7 ½ laps) on the track as a “benchmark” test. The purpose of these tests are to help you determine training progress, and to predict your current VDOT, a single number that is easy to work with when comparing performances and is ideal for setting training intensities (pacing). VDOT is a “pseudo VO2 max”, not necessarily your true VO2 max. VO2 max, and the VDOT value reflect a runners economy, and may not be the same for all individuals of equal race ability.

The following tables can relate performances over an unlimited number of distances, and can be used to predict performances in races of any distance from a known performance in a race of any other distance. In addition, the VDOT tables allow a runner to identify the pace associated with a desired training intensity.

To use the VDOT tables, look up a recent time under any of the distances presented, and read across that row to find the corresponding VDOT. If you have more than one recent race distance to work with the one that provides the highest VDOT is the one that describes your current state of fitness.

Be sure that the race from which you are predicting the VDOT was run on a flat course, with good footing, and under good weather conditions; when using a race run in difficult weather or terrain conditions, the time will be affected in a negative way and the VDOT will be lower than it should be. If, however, you are determining a VDOT on a trail run that will also be used for regular training sessions, then it is fair to use the VDOT value from that adverse course to set training intensities for the same type of adversity. You can use a time from a recent, moderate-distance road race to predict an upcoming marathon time, but the conditions of the two races must be similar for the prediction to be accurate; you cant expect to accurately predict a hot-day marathon time from a half-marathon under cool conditions

Once you’ve established your VDOT, use the second table (VDOT training intensities) to determine training intensities. Find the VDOT value that best applies to you, and move across the table to see various paces for the different kinds of training you may be doing.¹

During a prolonged period, when you may not have evaluated performance through races or testing, you may adjust your training intensity.

It is safe to increase your VDOT value by one unit after four to six weeks of training at the same value as long as your workouts seem to be getting easier.

¹ Daniels, J. Daniels Running Formula. Human Kinetics. 1998