

2.4 km of Sheer Hell

by Master Paul McPhail, VII dan
Technical Director

That's how I describe the 2.4km run required for the black belt fitness test. And I'm not the only one. In fact, no matter how fit you are, if you push yourself, it hurts just the same for everyone. The fitter you are of course, the faster you will be running – but it still hurts.

Nothing quite beats running to test your cardiovascular fitness – ie, the efficiency of the heart, lungs, and vascular system in delivering oxygen to the muscles. We borrowed the test from the Police and Army, who do a similar run. We especially like it because no matter what, you can't fake it. Unless you have the required fitness level, you simply will not be able to run fast enough to pass the test.

Cardiovascular fitness is an important element of the total fitness package required for achieving black belt. It is the base from which the other elements of fitness are built. Without a good aerobic base, you will be unable to achieve your maximum performance. And nothing quite beats running for improving cardiovascular fitness – but many people don't train properly, and end up wasting time and not achieving a good score. In this issue of Technical Tips I will give you my own 12 week personal training schedule, which has enabled even me... in my mid 40s, to get the run done in under 10 minutes.

The big mistake many people make when training for the 2.4 kilometre run is that they go out and run 2.4 kilometres. Before you are ready to test yourself at that distance, you must first put some time into building your fitness slowly. What you are able to do for this initial stage of your training will depend on your fitness level, running experience and other factors. Even if you have been good at running previously, spend some time building up slowly over a period of several weeks.

The Six Week Build Up

Start your running program by getting yourself some good running shoes and a diary. Write down the days you intend running, three or four times a week. Make a note each day of the time you spend running. Don't worry about the distance to start with, just record the time you run for. Initially you may only be able to run for 10 or 20 minutes – that's fine. Gradually build this time up over a period of six weeks so you can run 40 minutes without stopping. Give yourself easy days and harder days, but over the weeks try to build up the time you spend running. It may take you shorter or longer than six weeks before you feel comfortable, so use this time frame as a guide only.

The Test

Now you are ready to test yourself over 2.4 km. Do this on a weekend. Write down the time you ran in your diary. You will do this test once a week for the next six weeks.

The Six Week Interval Trainings

For the next six weeks you are going to be doing interval training. The trainings are all performed the same way: you'll first perform a 10 minute warm-up run at a very easy pace until you start to break a sweat—at this point you're ready to go.

Once you're warmed up, it's time to complete your intervals for the day. Using your watch to time yourself, simply go "all-out" for 20 seconds, and then back off to half that speed for 40 seconds, and repeat for the indicated number of intervals on the chart below. Once you have done that, complete the session with a 10 minute slow run home.

On the weekend, you'll perform the 2.4 km test, and even after one week of this interval training you notice a big improvement in your time.

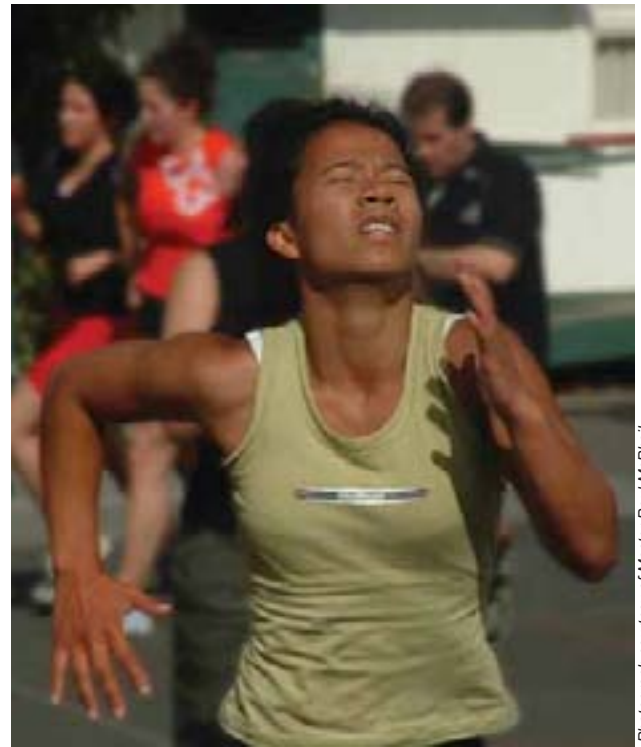
Fine tuning

When performing the interval run, the best way to ensure that your "rest" segment is half the intensity of the sprint segment is to make a mental note of the starting line, and then after your 20-second sprint, turn around and get back to that line in 40 seconds. Walking probably won't be fast enough – you'll have to jog-walk.

The great thing about interval training is that it's so brief. Nevertheless, results depend on working

hard – there's no way around this. So on those 20-second segments, really go for it!

Good luck with your running and I hope you enjoy the challenge as much as I do, regardless of whether you are preparing for a black belt grading or not. Please send me feedback on how you get on with this program: pmcphail@itfnz.org.nz.



Photograph courtesy of Master Paul McPhail

Dr Thu Thach, 3rd dan, giving her all during the fitness test run.

	MON	WED	FRI	SAT
Week 1	Run 10 mins 5 intervals Run 10 mins	Run 10 mins 6 intervals Run 10 mins	Run 10 mins 7 intervals Run 10 mins	2.4 km test
Week 2	Run 10 mins 6 intervals Run 10 mins	Run 10 mins 7 intervals Run 10 mins	Run 10 mins 8 intervals Run 10 mins	2.4 km test
Week 3	Run 10 mins 7 intervals Run 10 mins	Run 10 mins 8 intervals Run 10 mins	Run 10 mins 9 intervals Run 10 mins	2.4 km test
Week 4	Run 10 mins 8 intervals Run 10 mins	Run 10 mins 9 intervals Run 10 mins	Run 10 mins 10 intervals Run 10 mins	2.4 km test
Week 5	Run 10 mins 9 intervals Run 10 mins	Run 10 mins 10 intervals Run 10 mins	Run 10 mins 11 intervals Run 10 mins	2.4 km test
Week 6	Run 10 mins 10 intervals Run 10 mins	Run 10 mins 11 intervals Run 10 mins	Run 10 mins 12 intervals Run 10 mins	2.4 km test