

THE ENGINE-FIRST METHOD / FREE GUIDE

BREAK 1:20. THEN 1:15. WITHOUT DRILLING STATIONS.

Why the eight stations are almost never what's costing you the time, and the twelve weeks of training that actually move the clock.

READ THIS FIRST

IF THIS SOUNDS LIKE YOU, KEEP READING

You're in decent shape. Better than most people you know. You train four – five maybe six times a week and you don't skip sessions.

And yet your Hyrox time has barely moved in twelve months.

So you do what everyone does. You add another class. You push heavier sleds than race day. You find a wall ball gym and grind out sets of fifty on a Sunday. You watch a video about sled push foot placement and you drill it for three weeks.

Your time moves by ninety seconds. Maybe. And you're more tired than you've ever been.

Here's what I found when I stopped guessing and started counting: most athletes between 1:30 and 1:15 are not losing their race at the stations. They're losing it on the 8km of running in between, and in the journey from the station back onto the track.

I took my own time down through this range without adding a single dedicated station session for the first two thirds of the block. Not because stations don't matter, they matter enormously, and there's a whole chapter here on exactly when to attack them, but they were never the limiter in the first place.

This guide shows you the numbers, the four sessions that actually change them, and the six weeks at the end where the stations finally become the main event.

ONE THING BEFORE WE START

Nothing in here asks you to train more than you already do. Several parts of it will ask you to train less hard than you currently do, on purpose. That's the part most people can't stomach and it's the part that works.



CHAPTER 01

WHERE YOUR 80 MINUTES ACTUALLY GO

This is a realistic 1:20:00 split for a fit 40-year-old in the Open division. Look at it properly before you read the next page.

SEGMENT	TIME	SHARE
8 × 1km runs (5:07/km)	40:55	51%
Roxzone (the transitions)	5:00	6%
SkiErg 1000m	4:30	6%
Sled Push 50m	3:30	4%
Sled Pull 50m	4:15	5%
Burpee Broad Jump 80m	5:00	6%
Row 1000m	4:20	5%
Farmers Carry 200m	2:00	3%
Sandbag Lunges 100m	4:45	6%
Wall Balls ×100	5:45	7%
FINISH	1:20:00	100%

57%

RUNNING
+ ROXZONE

43%

ALL EIGHT
STATIONS

7%

YOUR SINGLE
BIGGEST STATION

Your worst station on the day, the one you obsess about, the one you built a whole gym session around, is seven percent of your race. Even a 45-second improvement on it buys you less than one percent off your finish time.



CHAPTER 01 CONTINUED

IT GETS WORSE FOR THE STATIONS

Split those eight stations by what actually limits you on race day, and the picture changes again.

On the SkiErg, the rower, the burpee broad jumps, the lunges and the wall balls, you are not stopping because you aren't strong enough. You could do every one of those movements fresh, all day. You're stopping because you arrived with your heart rate at 182 and nothing left to give.

Those five stations are engine-limited. Only the sleds and the farmers carry are genuinely limited by strength and technique.

RESPONDS TO A BIGGER ENGINE

88% / 1:10:15



RESPONDS TO STRENGTH & TECHNIQUE

12% / 9:45



WHAT THIS MEANS IN PRACTICE

Twelve percent of your race is asking you a strength question. Eighty eight percent of it is asking you an aerobic one.

If you spend the bulk of a training block answering the twelve percent question, you should not be surprised when your finish time doesn't move. That is not a motivation problem or a talent problem. It's an allocation problem.

THE ONE-LINE VERSION

Your stations aren't slow because you're weak at them. They're slow because you're already cooked by the time you reach them. Fix the arriving, and the stations get faster on their own.



CHAPTER 02

WHY FOUR HARD SESSIONS A WEEK IS MAKING YOU SLOWER

Here is the week I see most often. Two Hyrox-style classes. One CrossFit-flavoured session. A weekend run that starts easy and turns into a race against yourself by kilometre three.

Four sessions. Every single one of them somewhere between seven and nine out of ten.

That intensity is high enough to leave real fatigue behind, you finish flat, you sleep badly, your legs are heavy on Thursday but it's not high enough, and not long enough, to force the specific adaptations you're chasing.

You're too tired to go properly hard when it counts, and you're going too hard to accumulate the easy volume that builds an engine. You get the cost of both and the benefit of neither. Twelve months of that feels like commitment. On the results page it looks like a plateau.

4

SESSIONS
PER WEEK

0

GENUINELY
EASY

0

GENUINELY
HARD

The fix isn't more sessions. In most cases it isn't even different sessions. It's putting the ones you already do into two clearly separated buckets – and being honest about which bucket each one is in.

THE TEST

Think about your last four sessions. How many were easy enough to hold a conversation right through? How many were hard enough that you were relieved when they finished? If the answer to both is “none”, that isn't a work-rate problem, it's the only problem you have.



THE SYSTEM

THE TRAFFIC LIGHT SYSTEM

Every session you do gets one colour before you start. Not after. Before. If you can't name the colour, don't do the session.

RED — REDLINE

MAX 1-2 × WEEK

9–10/10. Threshold and interval work where the whole point is to be uncomfortable. You should finish these knowing you did something. They are the only sessions allowed to hurt.

AMBER — THE GREY ZONE

RATION RUTHLESSLY

7–8/10. Hard enough to tire you, easy enough to adapt to nothing. This is where 80% of self-coached Hyrox training lives and it is the single biggest reason people plateau. Amber has a place, race-pace work, simulations, but it is a tool, not a default.

GREEN — GENUINELY EASY

MOST OF YOUR WEEK

4–6/10. Nose-breathing, full-sentence conversational. This is where your aerobic base is built and it will feel embarrassingly slow for about three weeks. Then your green pace starts dropping and you'll understand.

THE RATIO

Roughly 80% green, 20% red, amber only when you've deliberately chosen it. If your week doesn't look like that, you've found your problem, and you can fix it this week without adding a single hour.

HOW TO KNOW YOU'RE STUCK IN AMBER

You finish most sessions tired but not wrecked. You never dread a session, and you never really look forward to one either. Your easy runs and your hard runs are within about thirty seconds a kilometre of each other. And when someone asks how the session went, the honest answer is "fine."



CHAPTER 03

THE FOUR SESSIONS THAT MOVE THE CLOCK

Weeks 1 to 8 of a twelve-week block. Four things. No stations.

01 EASY AEROBIC VOLUME — GREEN

Two to three runs a week, all conversational, building slowly toward 30–40km total. This is the least glamorous and most decisive part of the whole block. It lowers the heart rate at which you can hold race pace, which is another way of saying it makes every station cheaper.

02 ONE THRESHOLD SESSION — RED

Sustained work at the edge of comfortable. 4 × 6 minutes, or 3 × 10, at a pace you could just about hold for an hour. This is the session that raises your ceiling for the sustained, just-under-threshold effort a Hyrox run leg actually is.

03 ONE INTERVAL SESSION — RED

Shorter, sharper, 3–5 minute efforts with full recovery. Builds the top end you spend on the last two runs when everything hurts. One of these per week, never two.

04 TWO STRENGTH SESSIONS — HEAVY, BRIEF

Squat, hinge, pull, press, loaded carry. Low reps, real weight, long rest, in and out in 45 minutes. Not a metcon. Not a finisher. This **is** your sled and farmers work. It just doesn't look like it yet.

That's five to six sessions if you're already training four or five. If you can only manage four, drop the interval session, not the easy volume.

NOTICE WHAT ISN'T ON THIS LIST

No sleds. No wall balls. No burpee broad jumps. Not because they don't matter, but because for eight weeks they'd be taking sessions away from the thing that's actually holding you back. They get their own block, and it starts on page 9.



WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

A WEEK IN THE BASE BLOCK

Weeks 1–8. Move the days around to fit your life — keep the order and the spacing.

DAY	SESSION	DETAIL
MON	Strength — lower GREEN	Squat or hinge, heavy. Loaded carries. 45 min, no finisher.
TUE	Threshold run RED	4 × 6 min hard / 2 min jog. The hardest thing you do all week.
WED	Easy run GREEN	40–50 min, nose breathing, full sentences. Slower than feels right.
THU	Strength — upper & pull GREEN	Press, row, pull-up, core. Same rules: heavy, brief, no metcon.
FRI	Rest or walk GREEN	Actually rest. This is a session, not a gap between them.
SAT	Intervals RED	5 × 3 min at 5k effort / 3 min easy. Ski or row substitutes fine.
SUN	Long easy run GREEN	60–80 min conversational. Build 5 min per week, not 20.

CHANGE ONE THING AT A TIME

Don't implement this whole page on Monday. Pick the single change with the biggest gap between what you do now and what's above, for most people that's making the easy runs genuinely easy, and hold it for two weeks before you touch anything else. Blocks that get overhauled all at once get abandoned by week three.



CHAPTER 04

THEN, AT SIX WEEKS OUT, EVERYTHING CHANGES

This is the part of the guide people skip to. Read it in order or you'll take the wrong thing from it.

Nothing above says the stations don't matter. They matter enormously. What it says is that station work is a sharpening tool, not a building tool, and sharpening a blunt blade is wasted effort.

Drill wall balls in week two of a block and you'll get slightly better at wall balls while fresh, which is not a thing that happens in a race. Drill them in week ten, on top of eight weeks of engine work, and you're teaching a body that can now actually hold the pace how to express it under fatigue.

Same session. Completely different return. Timing is the whole trick.

1-8

BUILD THE ENGINE.
ALMOST NO STATION WORK.

9-12

SHARPEN IT.
STATIONS BECOME PRIORITY ONE.

So for the last four to six weeks before your race, the balance inverts. Volume comes down. Specificity goes up. The gym gets replaced by the track and the sled.

And now the sled work pays, because you're pushing it with legs that have eight weeks of aerobic development underneath them and a squat that went up 15kg while you weren't looking.

THE FINAL BLOCK

WEEKS 9–12: THE RACE-SPECIFIC BLOCK

Week 9

COMPROMISED RUNNING GOES IN

Run 1km, do one station, run 1km again. Once to twice a week. The skill you're building isn't the station it's holding run pace on legs that have just been emptied by it.

Week 10

ATTACK YOUR TWO WORST STATIONS

Now, and only now, is drilling worth it. Pick two. Sled technique, short strides, low hips, constant contact. Wall ball rhythm and breathing. Ten focused minutes, twice a week, always after running.

Week 10–11

REHEARSE THE ROXZONE

Six percent of your race is running between things. Practise the transition itself: how you approach, where you put your hands, how fast you start moving again. How long your breaks are in-between your reps.

Week 11

ONE HALF SIMULATION — AMBER, BY CHOICE

Four runs, four stations, at target race pace. This is a pacing rehearsal and a nutrition rehearsal, not a time trial. Resist the urge to race it.

Week 12

TAPER — VOLUME DOWN, INTENSITY KEPT

Cut volume by 40–50%. Keep a few short race-pace efforts so you don't go flat. Do nothing new. The work is already banked.

Note what's missing: there is no week here where you do four hard sessions. Even in the sharpening block, the traffic lights still apply.

WHY THIS ORDER AND NOT THE OTHER ONE

Everything in this block is about expressing fitness you already built. If you run it first – stations in weeks 1–4, engine work at the end, you spend a month sharpening something that isn't there yet, then arrive at the start line having built an engine you never learned to use. Same sessions, wrong order, half the result.

CHAPTER 05

WHAT TWELVE WEEKS LOOKS LIKE ON THE CLOCK

Same athlete. Same eight stations. Here's where a block like this actually finds its time.

SEGMENT	BEFORE	AFTER	SAVED
8 × 1km runs	40:55	38:00	-2:55
Roxzone	5:00	4:00	-1:00
All eight stations	34:05	32:10	-1:55
FINISH	1:20:00	1:14:10	-5:50

TIME SAVED ON RUNNING 50%



TIME SAVED IN THE ROXZONE 17%



TIME SAVED ON THE STATIONS 33%



Two thirds of the improvement came from running and transitions. The other third came from the stations, and notice that you got most of that third **without drilling them for eight of the twelve weeks**. It came from a bigger engine and a heavier squat, then a short, sharp, well-timed block at the end.

AND THE PART THE TABLE DOESN'T SHOW

You get to the start line fresh instead of frayed. Twelve weeks of mostly-green training with two protected hard sessions leaves you sharp on race day. Twelve weeks of four ambers a week leaves you hoping you feel good on the morning. That difference is worth minutes on its own and it never shows up in anybody's programme.



DO THIS THIS WEEK

YOUR FIRST FOUR CHANGES

In order. One at a time. Don't start the second until the first has stuck for a fortnight. All four are free and none of them add a session to your week.

01 COLOUR IN LAST WEEK

Write down every session you did in the last seven days and label each one red, amber or green, be honest. Most people find five ambers and nothing else. That single sheet of paper is your diagnosis.

02 MAKE ONE RUN GENUINELY EASY

Pick your most frequent run and slow it down until you can hold a conversation through it. It will feel wrong. Do it for two weeks anyway and watch what happens to the pace at that same effort.

03 PICK ONE RED SESSION AND PROTECT IT

One session a week that is allowed to hurt. Everything around it exists to let you do it properly. If you're too tired for it on the day, that's information about the rest of your week.

04 PUT A DATE IN THE DIARY

None of this works as a general intention. Pick a race twelve to sixteen weeks out and enter it today. A block with a date at the end of it is a plan. A block without one is just training, and training without a deadline is how you ended up here.

IF YOU ONLY REMEMBER ONE PAGE

Build the engine for eight weeks. Sharpen the stations for four. Never train amber by accident. Change one thing at a time and let it stick before you change the next.

Do that once, properly, and you'll take more time off your finish than the last two years of adding sessions did. Do it twice and 1:15 stops being a target and starts being a number you have to defend.



WANT THIS BUILT AROUND YOU?

KNOWING THE PLAN AND HAVING ONE AREN'T THE SAME THING.

Everything in this guide works. The hard part is the bit no PDF can do for you: deciding what your week should look like given your job, your race date and the four sessions you can realistically protect. Then adjusting it every week when life doesn't cooperate.

That's what I do. Structure, so every session has a reason. Accountability, so it actually happens. Progression, so you can see it working instead of guessing from feel.

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DYLAN GRUNDY · MANCHESTER

Tell me your race date and your current time and I'll tell you, free, whether you're an engine problem or a station problem. Takes me five minutes and it'll save you a training block.