

Need to burn fat? Find a hill

ASK ROCCO WITH ROCCO CASTELLANO

I've always been someone who hates wasting time, and it seems like that's what the average person training today does. Maybe it's the whole "rat race" thing that makes the perpetual idiots want to do cardio by walking or running on treadmills that literally allow you to go nowhere fast. It's very similar to the hamster on a hamster wheel.

Are you a hamster or a human? I always felt kind of bad for every hamster running his/her ass off and having nothing to show for it. Very much like ... oh ... you. Oops, Sorry. I didn't mean to hit a nerve.

Getting back to wasting time, and working out. When I was a kid I trained just like my boxing coach told me to, and I listened to every word. One thing that almost drove me to insanity was running 10 miles a day. To add insult upon injury I wasn't losing the weight I needed to. I wasn't a very fast runner – as a matter of fact, I was slow as shit. Running just felt like a daunting task that could never bring me to my goals.

I needed to make weight for my boxing matches, so the running thing was supposed to help me lose weight. But, it just wasn't happening. I needed to get twice the results in half the time. It sounds cliché but that's how my brain worked back then and now. So at the suggestion of my track coach, I decided to run some hills.

You're probably not familiar with Ridgefield, New Jersey or Ridgefield Memorial High School, but it sits at the foot of a beautiful winding hill called Major Stocum Drive. This beautifully wooded and hilly path would become my unrelenting nemesis for years to come. The more I trained on it, the more it would mock me. I had been running every day, at least 10 miles a day on average, and one set of interval hills kicked my ass so bad my legs felt like they were going to explode, my lungs where no longer inside my chest cavity (or so I thought) and I think my heart escaped while I was puking.

F**cking Major Stocum Drive, I still hate that hill! And I thank God every day that I ran it.

Although I did a bunch of strength related exercises at the gym like squats, leg presses, leg extensions and curls, I never felt the power that I was able to get from contracting my muscles against gravity in such a sustained fashion. What seemed magical was with this hill training I was able to take some time off and

still not lose my fitness gains. It helped to make my tendons and ligaments stronger as well. The side effect of this intense training was an extreme drop in body fat. With the increased workload in shorter spurts I was actually expending more calories than during my many hours of running. As I later found out my body had adapted to the sustained repetitive workload of the running and became efficient at using the energy required to propel me on my journey. Hill training created chaos in my energy systems and the increased workload expended more calories. It was totally win-win.

Here are some workouts I did to incorporate hill training into my program:

Interval Hills: It seems like simple physiology but really kicks your ass.

Warm up for about six to eight minutes either on a bike or take a short jog before you hit the hills. Try a small degree incline at first and gradually make your way to a steeper one. Each hill climb interval should be a minimum of 45 seconds in length. Stop at 45 seconds, turn around and make your way back down the hill walking. Rest about 30 or so seconds and run that hill again. Keep doing it until you feel like puking, or you actually puke. Yes, I'm a sadistic f**k, as you can imagine.

Treadmill Hills: In the unfortunate circumstance that you live in a place like Indiana where I think the only hills you will encounter are speed bumps, you may need to use a treadmill. It sucks,

but you live in flat country, so stop your whining.

Warm up for six to eight minutes. When you're sufficiently warmed up, set the grade of incline between 10 and 15 degrees. Run at 45 second bursts on the incline and then lower back down for 90 seconds. Then increase the incline again. Repeat until your body tells you to stop, or you feel like puking.

Downhill Training: Most individuals place emphasis on the uphill workouts for power and strength but "Downhill Training" helps to build stability at the knee and hip



joints. Just the act of keeping your balance while running down a hill will place great demands on your leg joints. This also increases stress on your lower quads and calf muscles (specifically, the gastrocnemius – the thick part). You don't want to sprint down the hill but run with the natural pace of the hill. Your strides should always be smooth and not choppy (as if you were braking with your feet). Braking can cause impact injuries to your quads and knee joints. Walk up the hill for about 100 or so yards turn around and run down the hill. Walk back up and repeat this five times. Increase as you see fit. Downhill training should be done once a week.

Overloading your body with this type of exercise places great demands on your energy and fat stores which in turn burns more fat and calories. Add this training into your workout when you have the need to cut your body fat exponentially.

Until next time. Attitude is everything.

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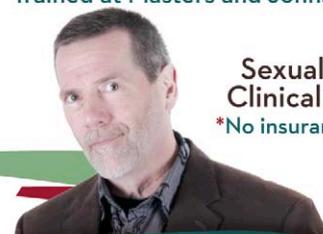
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