Best practices and standards for track coaches

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Contents

1. Overview

This document provides guidance and principles alongside a practical session outline for coaches or leaders delivering track sessions for Seaford Striders.

The guidance aims to uphold the commitment of Seaford Striders to offer appropriate and enjoyable running fitness sessions by EA qualified coaches and leaders.

Seaford Striders fosters an environment of self-development where coaches are encouraged to explore and develop their own coaching style and ideas within the club, and in collaboration with the club's coaching team. The guidance within this document provides the guardrails within which this is attainable.

This guide supports and extends the track training programme, available to the track coaching team, and the information in the [Track Risk Assessment](#).

All coaches and leaders delivering track sessions are accountable for adhering to the principles and practices in this guide.

Coaches and leaders are subject to observation by other coaches and leaders to ensure they are meeting the standards set in this guide.

2. Who is this guide for?

This guide is for coaches and leaders in Seaford Striders who deliver track or off-track training sessions.

Coaches and leaders must read and agree to adhere to the content of this guide before delivering sessions.

This guide is also available to members of Seaford Striders. If any members feel that the principles in this guide are not being upheld, then they are strongly encouraged to report this to a club welfare officer.

Current welfare officer contact info:
- Darren Evans (darrenevans@thegreenrunners.com)
- Kat Simmons (katherine@katherinesimmons.co.uk)

3. Track coaching principles

Coaches at track must abide by these principles:
1. Due to the nature of track night, sessions are designed to **cater to the group not the individual**. For individual coaching enquiries, please speak with the coaching team.
2. Our coaching style is one of **positive encouragement**. We do not criticise, favour, foster elitism, berate, or make examples of participants.
3. **Safety is a priority**. Track sessions can be adjusted or cancelled at any time by the coach based on their safety assessment - see the [Track Risk Assessment](#) for details.
4. Training sessions are **friendly and welcoming**. Even though training sessions are designed to be physically challenging, runners should always be made to feel welcomed and included in every aspect of the session.
5. Unless specified, sessions are **structured training** and are not races. Coaches provide clear goals utilising established training methods based on pace, time, or perceived effort. Sessions should not promote runners pushing as hard as they can or racing each other.
6. We do not tolerate **inappropriate behaviour**. If identified, any incidents including but not limited to bullying, derogatory, discriminatory, or unkind words, body or fitness shaming, intentional exclusion from groups, and emotional or other forms of harassment will result in individuals being told to leave and will be reported to the club's welfare team. This also applies to all coaching staff.

4. Health and safety

Health and safety awareness and responsiveness is embedded in the on-the-night core practices of the coach/leader. Core practices are included in section 9.

Key issues at track that require monitoring are:
- Obstructions/debris on track.
- Floodlights or natural light not providing enough visibility for safe activities.
- Poor track etiquette from runners.
- Adverse weather affecting track surface conditions.
- Runner injury.

Please refer to the club's Track Risk Assessment for guidance on decision making around health and safety at track night on these key issues.

5. Promoting track night

A common barrier to attending track, especially for the first time, is runners' perception that track is for those who they perceive to be better runners than themselves.

To help offset this, all materials that promote track night must use inclusive language to consistently promote track night as being applicable to all runners regardless of their speed, ability, or level of fitness.

See section 8 for guidance on language and tone of voice.

6. Track programme

The training programme is maintained by the coaching team with location and high-level details are shared publicly on the club website.

The programme is built around core training themes, with variations within the themes to introduce and develop training across a range of areas.

The themes are:

Theme	Description	Core benefits	Examples
Speed	Short, fast repeats with recovery intervals.	Develop raw speed power. Maximal development of muscle fibres.	16 x 200m.
Speed endurance	Longer speed sets with recovery intervals.	Improved anaerobic threshold.	Pyramid session. 3 x (800m - 1200m - 800m).

Endurance	Training at Lactate Threshold Pace (LTP) or slower.	Build an endurance "engine" for sustaining intensity over longer periods of time.	6 x 5 mins at LTP with 90 seconds recovery.
Low-impact (fun)	Less time at high-intensity but will likely involve some high-intensity. Also referred to as fun sessions, these provide chances for introducing social games and integrating runners across pace groups. Also used for sessions such as time trials.	Promotes the need for low-impact weeks in a training cycle.	Out and back relays, unmatched pair relays.

7. Coaching guidance

Coaches/leaders are expected to:

a. **Adapt sessions for who turns up.** It's fine to adapt sessions on-the-fly based on who attends. Again, keep the group over the individual in mind. For example, if you are planning on delivering a session that would work really well with a smaller group, but a larger group attends, you can switch to a more appropriate session with the same theme. You can use the session planner in the track programme source file (available to track coaches/assistants) as a guide.

b. **Focus on the runners, not the coach.** Your role is to deliver a safe and appropriate running session for the runners who are in attendance. It is not your job to ensure that your expertise as a coach is appreciated by runners by overexplaining or delivering sessions that only reflect well on you.

c. **Celebrate the successes** of runners and other coaches/leaders. By continually doing this, you are reinforcing the ethos of the club and inspiring others to celebrate each other, across all levels of performance.

d. **Not have an answer for everything.** You may not realise it, but as a coach/leader you are looked up to as an authority on all things running. As coaches, it's a natural response for us to want to try and offer help and provide answers. More often than not, you can provide more value by just taking the time to listen - and it's OK to say "I don't know". As much as we'd like to, we are not able to make medical diagnoses of injuries, or be able to

recommend rehab or training programmes to athletes on the fly. Equally as important, is our ability as coaches to realise that our perspective is not always the only viable answer, and we should communicate this to runners when offering advice.

e. **Not be afraid to say "No".** If you see someone pushing themselves in a dangerous way, or if there is someone using inappropriate behaviour, then you have the authority to tell them to stop or change their behaviour, refuse to continue coaching them, or even ask them to leave.

f. **Promote and manage track etiquette**. Runners must adhere to:
    i.   No undertaking.
    ii.   No fanning in groups across lanes.
    iii.   Keep to the inside (left), or their given lane(s) at all times.
    iv.   If they're approaching to overtake from behind, runners can shout "track" as a warning for people in front to keep left and not veer across lanes.
    v.   No overtaking/passing in close proximity.
    vi.   No pushing/elbowing/shoving.

g. **Set high standards**. As a coach, you should present high standards in your demonstration and explanation of technique, drills, movements, and exercises. This sets a high-bar for runners to aspire to. However, it is important to bear in mind that without consistent practice and conditioning, runners will not meet high standards immediately (as per the EA *skill = introduction, development, extension* model), so it is fine to not expect immediate perfection, or perfection at all. Taking this into account, be mindful of jumping too far ahead during *skill introductio*n based on the diversity of the levels within the group.

h. **Manage risks.** Taking sensible risks is encouraged - especially when you are new to coaching, but never when you are putting runners at risk of injury or danger. Always aim to identify and evaluate risks before and during sessions, and take the path of lesser risk.

i. **Fail.** Coaches are not perfect and we learn from our mistakes. Our culture of positive encouragement extends to our coaching team as well. To help with your understanding of where things may have gone wrong, do not be afraid to ask runners for feedback, especially at times where you felt things could have gone better. To discover ways of improvement, ask for and give feedback with other coaches and leaders in the club.

8. Language and tone used by coaches

As a coach, the way that you speak to runners, and talk about them, impacts on how they view themselves and how they perceive others view them.

When speaking with runners, other coaches, and when promoting or discussing track night, your language should be:

a. **Encouraging, not pushy.** Not all goals are achievable by everyone during each session. Coaches should encourage runners to challenge themselves within their means, not push runners for the sake of a coach's goal.
b. **Positive, not centred on failure**. Use positive reinforcement when correcting mistakes or coaching specific items. In addition to this, focus on the positive perspectives of a runner rather than on what may be perceived as failures.
c. **Helpful, not critical.** As coaches, we make suggestions to help runners, we do not just focus on what we perceive they are doing wrong. We always explain why suggestions are made - and all explanations are for a specific benefit to the runner.
d. **Aspirational across all levels**. As coaches, we do not champion only the fastest runners, everyone's achievements are equal.
e. **Humble, not condescending.** As coaches, speak to runners as you would to respected colleagues or peers. Do not talk down to or over them.

9. Session Structure

Element	Approx. time (mins)	Coach's tasks	Things to watch out for and remedial actions
Track check	2-5	- Walk/jog a lap around the track to check for obstructions or problems with the surface (you can assign this to someone else if time permits, but you are accountable). - For off-track, assess the location appropriately prior to the session.	- Check for ice, excess water. - Remove obstructions, including sticks, branches, litter, and any track rails that have encroaches on the lanes. - For off-track, assess for any potential risks and inform runners of them.
Briefing	2-5	- Welcome everyone. - Ask the names of any new runners. - Check for injuries. - Discover if anyone wishes to use outside lanes for slow runs. - Ask and congratulate on any weekend race. achievements. - Introduce the theme of the session and the benefits. - Explain track etiquette.	Seriousness of any injury and whether to offer 121 advice after briefing.
Warm-up	10-15	Deliver a warm-up appropriate to the main session.	Avoid highlighting individual mistakes unless dangerous. Instead,

				reinforce correct practices to the group as a whole.
Main session	20-35	- Clearly explain the main session to all groups. - Inform runners of key "gotchas" or tips for success. - Ensure runners will be aware of when reps end - i.e. distance, time, whistle. - For off-track, inform runners of any potential risks. - Only start the main session when you are confident that groups understand what's expected of them - During the main session, encourage runners. - Avoid being a stopwatch for runners, but aim to be aware of runners who need help with timing and provide support. If you see this as a wider issue (i.e. not knowing how to use their watch), offer advice at the end of the session to avoid it being a repeat issue.		- Avoid spending more time with faster runners or the perception of treating faster runners as if their session is more important. - Pull aside and speak to offending runners about bad etiquette if you spot it and the dangers it could result in.
Cool-down	10-15	Deliver a cool-down for all runners.		- Depending on the group, you can send runners for a slow-jog cooldown while others finish so everyone can participate in your guided cool-down together. - If you can plan the timings, it's OK to deliver multiple cool-downs, especially if different groups finish the main session at different times.
After the session (preferably in the following 1 or 2 days)	10	- In the programme spreadsheet: - Enter the attendance number. - Edit the session to include any adjustments you made. - Update the club welfare team with any issues you observed or were made aware of, however small or		

		insignificant these may feel at the time. ● You are strongly encouraged to share your general experiences and takeaways with the other coaches. These can include athlete observations, feedback on how you felt the session went, and any potential areas of follow up for the next session.	