



# **PEAKING FOR TRACK AND FIELD ATHLETES**

OWEN VAN NIEKERK

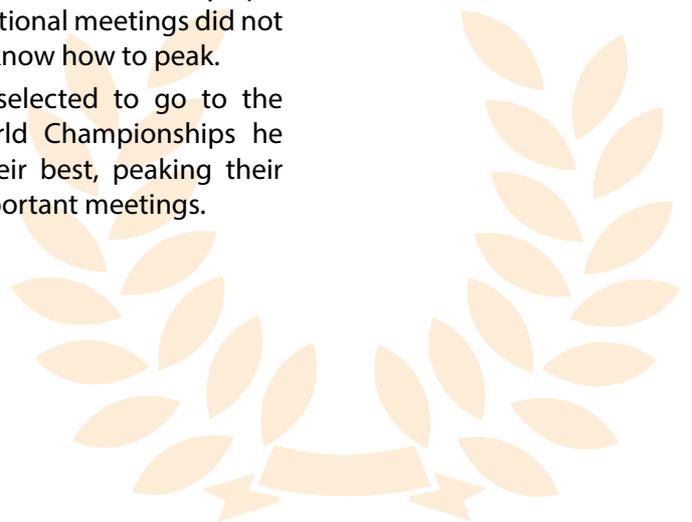


**Owen Van Niekerk**

*Author of a series of coaching books and a coach for track and field to many South African athletes over a dedicated lifetime.*

A book about peaking on the sports field became apparent when eighty percent of our athletes at the 2016/2021 Olympic Games and other international meetings did not peak or do their best or know how to peak.

When an athlete gets selected to go to the Olympic Games or World Championships he or she should be at their best, peaking their training for the most important meetings.



## PREFACE

Periodisation is the most successful method in today's world for organizing, training or competitive athletes. It can be applied to any event in Track and Field. South African athletes did well at the Rio Olympic Games and the World Championships in London 2017, but only thirteen percent of our athletes peaked or did their best. The other eighty seven percent were very far from what they could or should have run, walked, jumped or threw. The question is why? Firstly it is out of season for our athletes and some of them could not compete overseas in the European summer meetings (May to August), because of the lack of money, studies or work and secondly our coaches did not train athletes properly during the year or did not focus on the correct periodisation.

The book thus tries to explain periodisation and how to use it effectively in the South African setting. Applying the theory to our athletes is critical, because our national system has peculiarities unlike any other nation. Here we have summer from September to November, then a big break, December/January holidays, and then all the top meetings in February to April. The winter build-up starts again and the athletes have to do their training until July and peak in August for the important European meetings or the Games again.

Most of our athlete's successes come from our intensive system of organised school athletics, ranging from primary schools (six to thirteen years), to organised high school sports (fourteen to nineteen years). Then we either go to work or university with a short holiday in July. While this system provides opportunities for early exposure to sports, it also emphasises immediate competitive success over a very short time span with two major athletic seasons in seven months.

The emphasis with such a brief schedule is on a quick conditioning period (often as little as three weeks for school athletes) then placing into competition. It is conducive primary to locating natural talent, rather than developing skills for the future.

The most effective training systems require longer developing periods. However, our coaches are not using periodisation and are more likely making name by trying to just use the talented kid by trying to make him or her South African under 10 or 17 champions. Getting them to perform at the World Youth or Junior Championships and then be given a scholarship at a university, where no development takes place. With no background of correct development and correct training our athletes just became one of the many drop-out statistics of athletes in this country. At this stage it is too late to develop them correctly.

This book explores how periodisation of training can be applied, then shows how to use it effectively at our schools, where nothing is done in the form of development and winter build up training is taking place. Not a lot is done for the university and post school elite athlete either.

Our competitive season requires a peak during March/April and again during July/August for the elite athlete, going to Europe. This book explains how periodisation of training should be applied, then shows how to use it effectively at our schools, where nothing is done during the winter or at university level and for the post school elite athlete going to Europe. The book further diagrams the periodised training year and its application to periodised training at all levels. It shows how to apply periodisation to the different events of track and field with detailed discussions for all events.

Coaches and athletes are always searching for a better training input. Successful systems must meet local needs and conditions. Why not? Other sporting codes steal our talented athletes during the winter. Let us become better coaches and the athletes will stay with athletics at school level.



*The two Blignaut brothers Pieter and Phil were our first Springbok athletes. They travelled to Great Britain between 1893 to 1896. They were the founders of our Springbok colours, we have been so proud of for many years. A clothing manufacturer offered to make clothing for them for the various meetings. They asked what they would like their clothing to look like and they immediately said that the top must be green because it reminds them of their farm back in South Africa. Asked what type of badge would they like on their shirts they immediately asked if they could embroider a springbok because there were so many of these antelope in the country. In 1906 the South African Olympic counsel agreed that green would be the colour and a springbok would be on the badge for the first Olympic Games in 1908 in London. Reggie Walker won our first Olympic medal.*



*The first two athletes Lentauw and Yamasani from South Africa and Africa to compete at the 1900 Olympic Games in the United States of America which was then the World Fair. The two Zulu runners were there to work for their South African employer and competed in the marathon. They both finished in the first 10 places.*

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