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ATT BRZYCKI P-1 P9
DANA LANE
LAWRENCEVILLE NJ 08648-1583



**Set your
Sights**

Coping with rotating shifts

■ BY MATT BRZYCKI

Recently, I received the following e-mail from a New Jersey cop (which is paraphrased slightly):

I'm a patrol sergeant and SWAT cop, 40 years old, who works rotating shifts. I've always maintained pretty good physical fitness but I've never been able to break through the "rotating shift barrier." I work 12-hour shifts with four days on and four days off and rotate shifts every two weeks. The problem is that I just can't seem to get the correct formula of workout, nutrition and rest on this schedule. It seems to get worse as I get older. Can you point me in the right direction?

A second e-mail from the officer revealed specifics about his grueling work schedule. In a nutshell, it boils down into this cycle: four days from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m., four days off, four days from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m., four days off, four nights from 6 p.m. to 6 a.m., four days off, four nights from 6 p.m. to 6 a.m. and four days off.

He has raised an excellent question: How does a cop schedule workouts with rotating shifts? Even though different departments have different work schedules, it's a good bet that many cops have similar problems and concerns.

In order to plan a workout schedule, you must first lay out your work sched-

ule. To do this, grab a calendar and plot your work schedule over the entire length of time in which it doesn't repeat. Here, for example, this cop's schedule is basically a 32-day period that can be sub-divided into two 16-day blocks.



Matt Brzycki

During the 16-day period with 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. shifts, I'd suggest training in the evenings, shortly after the shift. Try to train at about the same time during those 16 days, even on the days off. So on a day of a workout, you might begin training at 6:30 p.m. regardless of whether you pulled a shift or were off from work.

Remember, consistency helps a great deal in adhering to a workout schedule. Along the same lines, try to grab chow – in this case, dinner – at the same time each day whether or not you worked. On the days that you work out, this would mean eating your dinner after your workout.

This same tactic would be used during the 16-day period with 6 p.m. to 6 a.m. shifts. I don't mean to sound redundant but to be clear, I'd suggest training in the mornings, shortly after the shift. Again, try to train at about the same time during those 16 days, even on the days off. So on a day of a workout, you might begin training at 6:30 a.m. regardless of whether or not you worked. And similar to the previous 16-day period, try to eat – in this case, breakfast – at the same time each day whether you worked or

were off. On the days that you work out, this would mean eating your breakfast after your workout.

Okay, what about the workout distribution? A lot of this depends upon your personal preferences. But an example of a well-rounded schedule would be five workouts in an eight-day period as follows: two days of strength training, two days of aerobic training and one day of aerobic training and strength training done in the same session. (On the day of aerobic training and strength training, you can do an abbreviated session of strength training.) In general, each eight-day period would start with a day off then a day of strength training, a day of aerobic training, a day off, a day of aerobic training and strength training, a day off, a day of strength training and a day of aerobic training.

One thing that might affect your workout schedule is whether or not you're allowed to do any physical training during your shift. Some departments give their cops an hour or so for physical training while "on the clock." If this is true of your department, you can arrange your workout schedule accordingly. Just try to devise a workout schedule that's as consistent as possible.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Experiment with different workout schedules based upon the tactics presented here and find out what best meets your particular needs. But remember that it will be easier for you to stick to your workouts if you try to schedule your training at roughly the same time every day whether or not you worked a shift. In doing so, your workouts become a habit. And, as they say, habits are hard to break.

Matt Brzycki is the coordinator of Recreational Fitness and Wellness at Princeton University. A former Marine Drill Instructor, he has authored, co-authored or edited 16 books on strength and fitness, including SWAT Fitness (available at www.optacinternational.com).

Golf outing Aug. 27 in North Brunswick

North Brunswick PBA Local 160 plans a golf tournament and dinner Aug. 27 at the Knob Hill Country Club. The PBA is inviting community members and other officers to enjoy a day of golf, fun, food and prizes. Shotgun start is 1 p.m.

Donations and sponsorships would be appreciated. Corporate sponsorships are available. The PBA uses donations to help support township associations and charities such as the local food bank and the North Brunswick Little League. The PBA also awards scholarships to deserving students.

To participate in the tournament or make a donation contact Jason Hatez, (732) 247-0922, ext. 319.