



2027

SOUTH AFRICA & REGIONAL TRAIL · 2027

THE 2027 ULTRA TRAIL BLUEPRINT

The full 2027 racing calendar, a coach's quarter-by-quarter training focus,
and a step-by-step plan to build your best season.



COACH'S WELCOME

The 12-month periodisation rule

A 100-miler or a multi-peak season isn't won on race day. It's engineered 12 to 18 months out.

Ultra-endurance success isn't just about piling up weekly kilometres. It's about demand-specific periodisation: matching your training to the demands of your target race, whether that means high-altitude vertical gain, technical descending durability, or continuous flat-to-rolling running economy.

This Blueprint gives you three things:

01

The 2027 calendar: the major South African and regional trail races, quarter by quarter.

02

Our coaches' training focus for each quarter, with a key workout for each.

03

A step-by-step plan to choose your races and build your season around them, ending in a one-page season sheet to fill in.

We don't train to endure more. We train to stay organised for longer.

HOW TO USE IT

Read the calendar and circle the races that excite you. Then work through the eight planning steps and fill in your season sheet. It takes one evening, and it decides whether 2027 is your best season yet or another year of "next year".

The 2027 racing calendar

Dates marked **TBC** were not yet confirmed by organisers at publication. Always check the race website before you enter.

Q1 Early season & desert endurance

25-28
MARCH

Addo Elephant Trail Run EASTERN CAPE

21 km, 50 km, 50 mile, 100 mile. Zuurberg mountains and dense thicket; rugged, remote, exposed to harsh weather.

23-25
APRIL

Ultra-Trail Drakensberg (UTD) KWAZULU-NATAL

25, 36, 65, 100 km, 100 mile. High altitude, severe vertical gain, technical ridge running, raw mountain wilderness.

Q2 Autumn & winter mountain classics

**30 APR-
2 MAY**

The Hobbit Trail Run EASTERN CAPE

5 to 90 km. Amatola mountains and Hogsback forests; heavy technical roots and steep forest climbs.

28-30
MAY

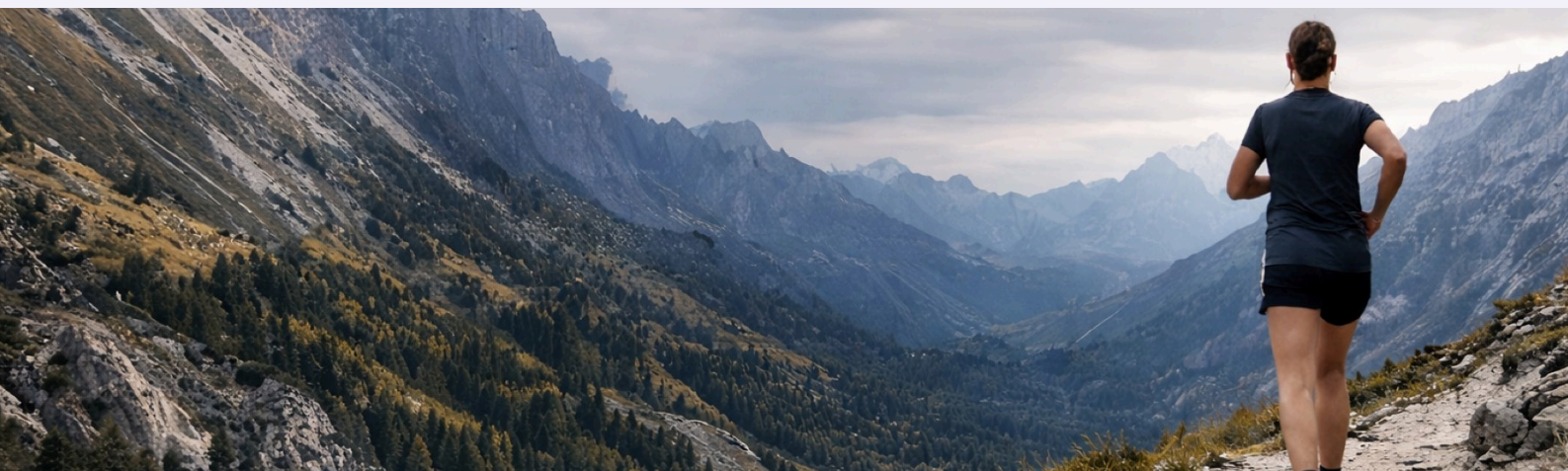
George MUT by UTMB WESTERN CAPE

11, 25, 44, 60, 100 km, 100 mile. Outeniqua mountains; technical single-track, massive vertical gain, UTMB Running Stones.

**30 JUN-
4 JUL**

Mac Mac Ultra MPUMALANGA

25 km, 46 km, 50, 100 and 200 mile. Sabie and Graskop escarpments; technical climbs, night navigation, massive elevation gain.



Q3

Late winter & spring endurance

9

AUGUST

Kaapsehoop Mountain Ultra TBC

MPUMALANGA

8, 17, 45, 69 km. Escarpment plantation tracks, misty mountain trails and rocky technical terrain.

21

AUGUST

Whale of a Trail

WESTERN CAPE

35, 53 km. De Hoop coastal single-track and fynbos ridges.

23-26

SEPTEMBER

Runyanga TBC

ZIMBABWE

30 km, 56 km, 50 mile, 100 mile. High-altitude running around Mount Nyangani.

24-26

SEPTEMBER

Karkloof Trail Run

KWAZULU-NATAL

10 to 100 mile. Fast, runnable forestry trails and rolling hills: pacing discipline and energy management.

25

SEPTEMBER

Salt Pans Ultra TBC

BOTSWANA

50 km, 100 km, 100 mile. Flat, vast and mentally demanding; navigation and heat management.

Q4

Year-end mountain showdowns & regional expeditions

2

OCTOBER

Run the Berg TBC

KWAZULU-NATAL

13, 25, 42, 65 km. Northern Drakensberg ridge runs and technical descents.

6-9

OCTOBER

The Otter African Trail Run

WESTERN CAPE

42 km. Tsitsikamma coastal single-track, 7,000+ stairs, river crossings.

7-10

OCTOBER

Cederberg Traverse

WESTERN CAPE

21, 50, 60, 110 km, 100 mile. Remote sandstone wilderness and self-sufficiency.

9

OCTOBER

Luneburg Ultra

KZN / MPUMALANGA BORDER

5, 10, 23, 65 km. Forestry roads and steep farm single-track.

23

OCTOBER

Cape Cobra Trail Run TBC

WESTERN CAPE

10, 21, 33, 42 km. Coastal fynbos and steep mountain ascents.

13

NOVEMBER

SkyRun TBC

EASTERN CAPE / DRakensberg

38, 65, 100 km. Unmarked, self-navigated high-altitude ridge running.

26-28

NOVEMBER

Ultra-Trail Cape Town (UTCT) TBC

WESTERN CAPE

16, 23, 35, 55, 100 km, 100 mile. Table Mountain; world-class field, technical stone ascents.

3-4

DECEMBER

Paarl Rock Trail Run / Ultra

WESTERN CAPE

5, 12, 22, 44, 100 km. Granite outcrops, punchy climbs, fast single-track.

3-5

DECEMBER

SkyRun Zim TBC

ZIMBABWE

32, 56, 70, 126 km. Nyanga granite domes and high plateaus.

The coach's quarter-by-quarter focus

Q1

Base engine & environmental adaptability

- **Aerobic foundation:** keep 80–85% of your volume strictly easy (zone 1–2). A broad aerobic base early in the year builds capillary density and mitochondrial efficiency without overloading your nervous system.
- **For Addo (heat and exposure):** introduce heat acclimation about 4 weeks out (post-run sauna or midday easy runs) and lock in a sodium and fluid replacement plan.
- **For UTD (altitude and vert):** add low-cadence, high-resistance power hiking on steep gradients to build calf and hip-flexor endurance before you hit high elevation.

KEY WORKOUT

The Progressive Vert Block: a 2-hour aerobic run finishing with 3 × 10-minute sustained power hikes on the steepest trail you can find, holding a steady heart rate.

Q1

Q2

Heavy vertical gain & technical durability

- **Protect your quads:** mountain races aren't lost on the climbs; they're lost on the descents. Downhill running causes heavy eccentric muscle damage, so condition your quads to absorb landing forces. Build that downhill load in your build phase, not in base.
- **Technical footwork:** spend time on loose rock, wet roots and uneven single-track to build ankle stability and quick, reactive footwork.

KEY WORKOUT

Repeated Descent Intervals: find a 300–500 m technical downhill. Run down at controlled race effort, focusing on light footfalls and quick turnover, then power hike back up. Repeat 4–6 times.

Q2

Q3

Running economy & pacing discipline

- **Continuous mechanical load:** runnable ultras like Karkloof or Salt Pans give you no natural walking breaks, so your muscles face constant fatigue with no relief.
- **Fuelling at speed:** digesting carbohydrate is much harder while running continuously than while hiking up a mountain. Ultras call for 60–120 g+ of carbohydrate an hour depending on your individual tolerance, and that's hardest at a continuous pace, so train your gut during high-tempo long runs (see the gut progression in Part 3).

KEY WORKOUT

The Steady Pace Fatigue Test: a 3-hour long run where the final 60 minutes are run strictly at target race pace, practising your exact race-day fuelling every 20 minutes.

Q3

Q4

The grand finale & peak execution

- **The taper:** cut total volume by 40–60% over about the final two weeks, keeping short bursts of intensity. This restores glycogen and repairs muscle without losing sharpness.
- **Psychological execution:** break your ultra into manageable sections rather than thinking about the full distance, and set clear mental reset cues for when the dark patches hit.

KEY WORKOUT

Sharpening Intervals (2 weeks out): a 60-minute easy run with 5 × 2-minute efforts at tempo pace, focusing on feeling light, fast and fully recovered.

Q4

1 Start with the one race that matters

Choose your A-race first. It is the race the whole season is built to deliver, and it earns everything: the full build, the full taper and the full recovery afterwards. When every race matters, none gets a proper build.

How many A-races a year depends on distance, because longer races are owed longer recovery. In your first two seasons at a distance, take one fewer.

A-RACE DISTANCE	A-RACES A YEAR	FIRST TWO SEASONS AT THE DISTANCE
200 miles	1	1
100 miles	1–2	1
100 km	2	1
50 miles	3	2
50 km	3–4	2–3

2 Put the other races around it

- **B-races are proving grounds, not fitness builders.** Rehearse pacing and fuelling, test your execution under stress, and find what goes wrong while it's cheap. They don't replace long runs and get only a few easier days, not a full taper.
- **C-races are training days.** No taper, no recovery owed.
- **Protect the main goal.** If a smaller race eats into your A-race build, it drops to a B, then a C, and if it still doesn't fit, it goes.

Good 2027 pairings: Addo (March) or UTD (April) as a B-race before MUT (May); Kaapsehoop (August) before Karkloof (September) or UTCT (November).

3 Count backwards from race day

PHASE	WEEKS (16–20 WEEK PREPARATION)	WHAT IT'S FOR
Base	6–8	Aerobic foundation, strength, trail skills, durability
Build	4–6	Harder, race-like work; controlled downhill load
Specific	3–5	Training that looks like your race: terrain, fuelling, pacing, kit
Peak	1–2	The taper: less volume, less downhill, nothing new

With less time the phases shrink, but the order never changes, and a phase ends when you're ready, not when the calendar says so. After the race, plan about two weeks' recovery after a 50 km and three after a 100 km or 100-miler.

Late-season training expresses fitness. It doesn't build it.

4

Build the season around your life

Mark your work peaks, travel and family commitments before the year starts, and plan lighter blocks there now. A plan that ignores your life doesn't survive February.

- **An easier week every three to four weeks**, cutting training by about a third.
- **When life gets heavy, change as little as possible, in this order**: simpler sessions, then shorter, then easier, then an extra rest day. Drop whole sessions only as a last resort.
- **In your fifties and beyond**, shorter cycles work better: two building weeks, then an easier one.

5

Get the skills in before the hard training

Trail skills belong in base training, when you're fresh enough to practise them well. Heavy downhill conditioning comes later, in build. Descending is the highest-skill part of trail running: shorter steps, quicker turnover, controlled breathing, eyes ahead.



LIVE COURSE

TRAIL CONFIDENCE

live 6-week course with Fred · starts Tuesday 19 January 2027 · mindfulrunner.co.za

6

Train your gut during the build

Race fuelling should never be new on race day. Start carbohydrate within 30–45 minutes, drink 200–400 ml an hour, and never force food through nausea. For an ultra, aim for 60–120 g+ of carbohydrate an hour. Where you land in that range depends on your individual tolerance, which is exactly what gut training builds.

WHEN	ON EACH LONG RUN	WATCH
Build, weeks 1–2	Find your starting point, often about 30 g an hour	Score your gut 0–10 after each run
Rest of build	Add about 10 g an hour every week or two, towards your race target	Score 4+? Drop back 10 g for a week
Specific phase	Hold race-day amounts with your race foods, at race effort	Nothing new from here
B-race	Run your full race fuelling plan	Fix what goes wrong now



LIVE COURSE

FUEL YOUR ULTRA

live 6-week course with Fred · starts Tuesday 2 March 2027

7

Plan race day like a race, not a long run

- **Pace for the last third, not the first.** Hold back through the first half.
- **Break the course into sections,** each with its own effort, fuelling and checkpoint plan.
- **Rehearse aid stations, kit and drop bags** at a B-race.
- **Plan your low points before they happen,** so the decision is already made.



4 WEEKS WITH FRED

RACE SMARTER

kit, pacing, aid stations and race strategy · 4 weeks with Fred · April and August 2027 · includes the Sigwren race planner for your race

8

Stay durable all year

We coach for the long game: a season that works this year and leaves you able to do it again at 50, 60 and beyond. Consistency beats intensity.

- **Strength twice a week in base,** dropping to once a week through build and specific, with nothing new. Stop gym work in the last four weeks before your race: strength gains last, fatigue doesn't.
- **The off-season is as much mental as physical.** Keep moving without a plan (hike, run easy, ride a bike) with no targets for a few weeks. Look back at what worked before you plan the next season.

The athlete's pre-season checklist

- 01 Runway:** do I have at least 16 to 24 weeks of uninterrupted build time before my A-race?
- 02 Durability:** have I planned two strength and mobility sessions a week in my base phase?
- 03 Specificity:** does my training terrain reflect the gradient and technical demands of my race?

#BEEEXTRAORDINARY

Your 2027 season on one page

WHAT	RACE / DATES	NOTES
A-race		
B-race(s)		
C-races		
Base		
Build		
Specific		
Taper and race		
Recovery		
Life peaks (work, travel, family)		

Powered by Sigwren: no spreadsheets, no cookie-cutter plans

True coaching isn't a spreadsheet or a generic algorithm that treats every runner the same. You don't start from the same fitness as anyone else, and your body doesn't adapt, recover or respond to training like anyone else's. That's why we build our coaching on Sigwren, the ultra and trail platform built on physics:

MODEL THE RACE

we decode the profile, elevation and terrain demands of your target event.

MEASURE THE ATHLETE

we measure where your fitness and recovery stand today.

CLOSE THE GAP

your coach adapts your training as your body responds, every week.

Take the guesswork out of your 2027 season

Book a free call and tell us your race and your life. We'll tell you honestly how we'd approach your season.

Book at mindfulrunner.co.za · or tap the WhatsApp button on our social profiles to talk directly with a coach.



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