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October 2011 Training Newsletter

By Bruce Deacon

Avoiding Those "Rookie Mistakes"

The countdown is on and in a matter of days thousands of runners will be lining up for the GoodLife Fitness Victoria Marathon and Half Marathon. Unfortunately, after months of training some runners will have unwittingly sabotaged their races before the gun is fired through "rookie mistakes." Avoid these errors to increase your chances of a great run:

1. Don't cross-train the week of the race!

Pre-race jitters and a gym full of exercise equipment is often a deadly mix. Faced with the typical nervous insecurities, runners can easily be tempted to try a new exercise, do one more set, attempt a harder weight, or push the effort on an aerobic machine. Don't put yourself in a place where you could be tempted. Take a week off from your cross-training regime, and rest up for the race.

2. Now's not the time for weight loss.

Thinking of going on a diet to lose a few pounds? Save it until after the race. You need to be adding carbohydrates in the last few days and not counting calories to drop your weight. Beginning three days before your race, increase the volume of complex carbohydrates that you consume. Stay away from simple sugars or fats, and reach for the whole wheat pasta, potatoes, and brown rice.

3. Avoid crazy activities.

When your friend calls to invite you to play a game of pick-up basketball, just SAY NO! You want to arrive at the start line without any lingering aches and pains from being reacquainted with muscles you forgot you had.

4. Don't risk getting sick.

Half of the battle is getting to race day healthy. Give that co-worker with a cold an extra wide berth during the pre-race week. Pound back some vitamin C, a pro-active dose of Cold-FX, and lots of water. Treat your body to a few extra hours of sleep early in the week, leaving the late-night movies to the post-race celebrations.

5. Don't worry about resting up before the race.

A lot of people will refuse to cut back on their training because they are scared of losing fitness. Nothing is further from the truth. Scientific studies found that even after 3 months of no exercising, your maximum oxygen intake (VO₂ MAX) only drops by about 15%. In other words, even if you didn't do any running the week before the race, you would not suffer a significant decline in your ability to transport oxygen. You should be cutting your regular mileage by 2/3rds over the last 10 days. Your legs will be thankful that you tapered when you reach the last few kilometres.

6. Try nothing new on race day.

While that new jog-bra or pair of shorts may look really fashionable, it is best not to discover that they cause chaffing when you still have an hour left of racing. Eat the same things you have



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practiced before and during your long runs. I still remember running from porta-potty to porta-potty at the Boston Marathon after being talked into trying a new energy drink on race morning. Wear the shoes you've trained in, and not the flashy new ones you picked up at the race expo. Who cares how light your shoes are if your feet are bleeding at 15km.

The Secret to a Great Race: Pacing

When the gun goes off on October 9th, what will you do to get the best out of yourself on the day? Will you go out at a quick pace or sit back and be conservative?

Physiologists tell us that the most efficient way to race is even pacing. In fact, some go so far as to suggest that every second gained in the first half on the optimal pace will cost two seconds due to fatigue in the latter stages of the race.

Unfortunately, even pacing is difficult, and takes some work to get it right. The excitement of the race, the crowds at the start, and the uncertainty of what exactly we can run per kilometre all challenge our efforts to run an evenly paced race. On race day, situate yourself among others wanting to run a similar time, by asking those around you their anticipated finish times. There is no use pushing towards the front, if those around you will then be pulling you out too fast.

Break the race into thirds. The first third of the race is run at a pace that you know you can hold for the full distance. Use this section to get yourself well warmed up and into a solid rhythm. Don't try to bank time by going out fast when you are fresh, but rather bank energy that you will use distribute evenly over the whole race.

By the second third of the race, you are warmed up and feeling great. Gradually begin to pick up the effort, using the kilometre markers and your stopwatch to keep track of your pace. Keep a little back though, as it is the next third when the running gets tough.

The last third of the race is the time to dig down and get aggressive. This is when you pour it on, using those ahead of you as targets to chase. By saving something for the end, you feed your confidence and build a powerful sense of momentum as you pull past other runners as they struggle over the last few kilometres.

Proper pacing means more than just racing faster times. It also leads to more satisfying finishes. There is nothing that beats pulling past other runners who bolted off at the start, while you held back and ran your pace.

Wanting More Advice?

Do you have more questions about your training? Dash me a note at coachbruce@runvictoriamarathon.com

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