



## September 2010 Newsletter - Training Newsletter

### Learning Your Race Pace

When the gun goes off, there are only two important things to know: what is your race pace, and how do you settle into it fast. If you don't know your pace, then you are very likely to be swept up by the excitement of the moment and go out too fast. This is a mistake that will find you around 25km. Of course it is no good to know your pace, if you can't settle into within the first 5km.

In my second marathon, I had set the goal of breaking 3 hours. It was a lofty goal considering my previous best time was 3:30. But there was no talking sense into me; I wanted that sub 3 hour time. I dashed off well on pace for my goal, setting personal best times for 10 miles and the half marathon. However, my body just wasn't ready to lop half an hour from my time. In the end, I ran one of the toughest races of my life.

You probably already have a goal in mind, but how do you know if you can reasonably hit your time? How can you be sure that your goal is realistic? The best way to tell is to do a shorter race. By running a 10k or a half marathon, you get a good indication for how your training has gone. By using a running equivalency calculator, you can determine how your time over a shorter distance is likely to translate to a marathon. A Google search will locate many of the ones that are available on the internet. Some are more accurate than others, so average the times from a couple of these calculators.

If you can't find a convenient race, you can assess your readiness by doing a track workout. Use the equivalency calculator backwards by inputting your marathon goal time. This should show you a 10k equivalent time. For instance, if you are shooting for a 4 hour marathon, then you should be able to run a 51:00 10k. That means that you should feel fairly strong doing a workout of 4-5 times 1600 at your 10k pace of 8:13/mile. If this is a breeze, then you should be well on your way to a 4 hour time. On the other hand, if you finish up seeing stars and throwing up, then you probably either have the flu or an unrealistic marathon goal.

If you are following one of the training schedules, you will notice that some of the long runs and workouts call for running at race pace. Find a route that is either measured (the marathon route is

ideal) and get used to running at your goal pace by checking your pace as you complete the run. If a measured route is tough to find, consider doing some of the tempo running on a track.

After a few of these tempo runs you will get to know your race pace and will become good at running the right pace. If you are finding that the pace is a struggle during your tempo runs, then you might need to revise your goals.

The danger to this type of training is that it is easy to convince yourself to run faster than you should. Regrettably, I have left some of my best fitness on my tempo runs, arriving at race day having peaked in training. The lesson is that it is important to keep to your pace and slow down to a training pace once the tempo portion of the training is complete.

### **Tune Up Races**

While running shorter races leading up to the big marathon or half marathon day is not necessary, it sure can help. Here are some of the benefits:

1. A hard race forces you to dig deep and learn how to run through some discomfort. This mental hardening will pay off in spades over the last 10km of your marathon when your legs are screaming for you to stop and your mind is spurring you on to the finish.
2. There is no greater workout than a hard race. It is an ideal way to force your body to reach for a higher level of fitness.
3. You can learn how well your training has been going. A race gives you an objective measure of how fit you really are, and confirms if your marathon or half marathon goal is attainable.
4. Most races have aid stations and this provides a perfect chance to practice drinking on the run. This is valuable skill come marathon day.
5. You get to practice and refine your race day routine. Try out your pre-race breakfast, warm up, and racing clothes.

One word of caution: avoid racing a half marathon within 3 weeks of a marathon. Instead, look for 8-10km runs during the final few weeks. Don't race the week before a marathon, but save your energy for the big day. The goal of a tune-up race is to get ready for the effort that really counts: October 10<sup>th</sup>!

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