

NY Marathon Final Weeks by Beth Kenney

We are all now in the taper and the months of training for the New York Marathon is behind us. There is nothing we can do now except screw up the training, so relax and allow yourself to rest and prepare for the race. **DO NOT** make the rookie mistake of trying to cram just a little more training in. It will only make you too tired to race optimally. I wanted to pass on a few Do's and Dont's and to also invite any questions you might have. I will answer your questions personally, or if you don't mind, I will share you question, as many others might be wondering the same thing and we can all benefit from the answer. I am already getting questions from some of you – keep them coming. I jotted down my thoughts on the most common errors and the tried and true success tips and they are here. First the recipe for disaster:

Too many coaches in your head

- **Amateur Coaches:** Your friends, family, training partners – just about anyone who's heard that you are running a marathon has advice for you. If you are listening to a seasoned marathoner and they give you a bit of advice that you have *time to try in training*, go ahead and see if this will help you. Little tips that will make the day go smoother can be very helpful. But watch out for the drastic advice that will cause you to deviate from your plan. (ie, Vaseline on the parts that chafe, elastic shoelaces so yours don't come untied, etc). Avoid like the plague dangerous are ideas that involve some magic substance that will erase fatigue/quell cramps/make you faster or anything that causes you to deviate from your pacing strategy. Do not try Creatine, Magnesium, No-doze, Glycerine or Ephedra. These can be deadly and I mention them because I know athletes who have tried one or all of these!

You also need to be careful when listening to well-intentioned fellow athletes who take a stab at predicting your finish time. You know – “You could go sub 4/3/2:45/2:30/qualify for Boston/qualify for the Olympics/win prize money.” All this does is put pressure on you. Of course you have your own goals, but if this is your first marathon, you have to be very careful about looking for a specific finish time. If you've done the marathon before, expectations of huge drops in time can be unrealistic – unless there has been a very drastic change in training. And remember, there is a difference between a 3:30 finish (8:01 per mile) and 3:35 finish (8:15 per mile). If you think it's a big difference in a 10K, it's HUGE in a marathon. Stay in the moment, manage the race, stay hydrated, keep your HR below threshold and allow the race to unfold.

- **Professional coaches:** Runner's World, Running Times, Hal Higdon, Jeff Galloway, your own coach – everyone has advice on the best way to train for and run a marathon. Type “marathon training” into the Google browser and you will yield 8,900,000 results! While it really pays to be educated, too much information, especially when it is conflicting, can be overwhelming. Months ago you decided to follow *someone's* advice and it has gotten you this far. Now is not the time to scrap your strategy and go with a new game plan. You are bound to be

nervous and no one ever feels like they've trained enough, but relax and stick with the plan.

Changing Anything at the Last Minute: Of course you know you won't wear new running shoes the day of the marathon. If you bought new running shoes a couple of weeks ago, that's ok – as long as you didn't change the type of running shoe. In other words, don't do your 22 mile training run and a motion control shoe and the marathon in a cushioning shoe. Very experienced athletes will sometimes train in a cushioned shoe or lightweight trainer, and wear flats for race day. Unless you are Kenyan and/or have tried at least one long run in flats, don't do it! The same goes with clothing – nothing you haven't worn before so that you know it doesn't chafe. Be smart about your food – don't try something different for breakfast because you read that Joan Benoit used to eat it.

You even need to be aware of any medication that you take. Do you take it on a regular basis? Have you trained on it? Many medications are dehydrating or can cause stomach upset, so only take them if you need them (this especially includes Advil!)

Staying too long at the Fair: Remember that the day before the marathon should be spent in the most relaxing way possible, so to the extent that you can, keep it simple. The marathon expo is a blast – all the famous athletes, the cool new clothes and products, the fellow runners – but if you are on your feet fighting crowds for 4 hours, you are not doing yourself any favors. Don't plan a big festive dinner that will go on past bedtime either. The day before should be spent checking the plan, packing the bags, getting clothes ready, eating complex carbs and a little protein, drinking LOTS of water, and staying off your feet. Allow yourself to relax early in the evening then go to bed and shut the lights. If you can't fall asleep, relax and visualize your race mile by mile. Picture yourself going easy at the start and not fighting the crowds. Jogging lightly to the starting line and keeping your line of vision close so that you don't get jostled in the crowd. Let the rabbits go, they are wasting energy anyway. You will catch them at mile 24, where they will be walking. Make sure you are relaxed and that your HR is well below threshold. Don't go faster just because you feel great. Anticipate curves in the road and cut the tangents. Anticipate the water stops and find the smoothest route to someone with 2 cups of water (in case someone ahead of you grabs one). Point to that person to indicate that you will take their cup. Squeeze the top of the cup and keep running, sipping as you go until you are in the clear. If you need to stop to drink, do so and then move on. Repeat each mile. Alternate water with Gatorade after mile 4. Now go to sleep and wake up feeling relaxed and excited at the same time!

Recipes for Success

Congratulate yourself for Getting to the Start Line: SO many things can prevent starting the race, including lack of training and over training, or getting hit by a car ☺. A lot of people PLAN to do a marathon. Far fewer actually start one. Armed with this knowledge, you should be confident in your plan. You WILL finish. Enjoy the experience! This is the point where I need to insert – For Heaven's Sake, No iPods! First

of all, they are illegal, but no matter, you will see plenty of them. But this may be the only time you will do the New York Marathon. Experience it!!!

Stay Calm: Chances are, at some point during the marathon you are not going to feel great. And it might happen more than once. For me it always surprised me that no matter how many times I trained on the Boston course, for some reason I could feel my legs getting fatigued at mile 10 of the race. First thought: “Great. I still have 16 miles to go.” But the best thing you can do is relax, check your form, make sure you are getting water/Gatorade or energy gel if you need one and keep going. If you started out nice and easy and you are managing your HR, taking in some fuel and staying relaxed should help and the feeling will probably go. When you get to a rough spot one trick to try is to break the race down into VERY tiny portions. Nice and easy to the next aid station, or picture that you are on a track and you are clicking off the quarter miles. Anyone can run one loop of the track. And then another, and another, and so on. You can also tell yourself that in 4 hours you will be laying on a massage table and someone will be rubbing your legs. The entire marathon will be history for you. You will get this done!

Stay in the Moment: This is probably the most important piece of managing the day. You shouldn't even be thinking of the finish line until the last 5K. Focus on what's just ahead of you. Think about how you are feeling and about what you need to do to optimize the good. Are you relaxed? (head, shoulders, knees and toes) Are you smiling? (try it – this really works! You'll get the crowd to smile with you and you will feel better just by allowing yourself to be happy). Are you in a clear, straight line? How is your HR? If the next water stop is coming, what is the smoothest path to the volunteer with water? Be peripherally aware of the crowds, but focus on you in the here and now. You'll be surprised how quickly the day goes by.

Please feel free to email me at:BAK5557@aol.com with any questions you have regarding your final training or race strategy. I will do my best to get back to you the same day.

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