

**Racing Tips – Tip #1 – “RUN FAST!”** Use races leading up to the marathon/half-marathon as “labs.” Experiment with things you have tried in training and see how they work while running/walking quicker than you train. Remember you are an experiment of “one” and what works for me might not work for you or the other way around.

**Tip #2 – Don’t start off too fast** – From the veteran racer to the first time racer this is the number one mistake and it will cost you. Don’t be fooled by “putting time” in the running bank for later. It doesn’t pay off in the end. In a 5k if you go out too fast you might struggle for the last mile, but in a marathon, if you go out too fast you will struggle for the last 6 miles, 10 miles, or, yes, even 13 miles. Why does this happen? First of all there are so many people running and cheering for you. Secondly, you are keyed up for the big race. You have trained hard and spent 6 months getting ready. At the start, focus on a relaxed pace. At the first mile mark evaluate the situation. If you started out too fast then back off and evaluate your pace at mile 2. If you started out too slow, do NOT speed up quickly, but rather use 2-5 miles to get to the pace you want. Every world record from the 5k to the marathon is set using an even pace or even negative splits. A negative split is running the second half faster than the first half. This takes practice and discipline. It also takes confidence in the fact that you are trained and ready.

**Tip #3 – Drinking tips** – First of all, you don’t need to drink two cups of fluid at every stop (unless it is extremely hot, 80s or higher). One cup will do or like me, a few sips of PowerAde and a few sips of water. When approaching the water stop check around you and see how crowded it is. If you are wearing gloves, take one or both off and tuck them into your shorts. I don’t like my gloves wet, especially with sticky PowerAde on them. At water stops people will be yelling whether they are handing out water or Powerade/Gatorade, so listen to what is being offered. If you don’t drink Powerade/Gatorade and that is what you grab then you are stuck. Usually water is first and then PowerAde. Make eye contact with the person whose cup you are going to grab. Focus on the cup. Grab it. Pour a bit out if it is really full. Pinch the top. It is now easier to sip from the spout you have made. Look towards the curb to make sure no one is next to you and throw the cup to the side. Special note, if you are using Gu/Gel or other foods, water stops are the only spot where you

should be throwing your wrappers on the ground. The people here will clean it up for you. Remember to always thank the people at these spots! Without them, you would be carrying your own water or grabbing cups off of a table. I have done both at races and it isn't much fun. Volunteers make the race easier for you. Special note. If you really want to learn what works and doesn't work at a water stop, then volunteer at one. You will get a first hand look and best of all – you will be giving something back.

**Tip #4 – Goals** – Always have 3 of them: #1 goal is to just finish. #2 goal is to set your own personal record (PR) or a specific time goal. Some courses aren't conducive to PRs, so a time goal is better. #3 is a “stretch” goal. This goal is rarely ever attained, but you never know when the planets will be in alignment. A day when everything comes together. I believe that when your body, mind, and soul are all peaking then a stretch goal can happen. You also need good weather and you can't control that, so don't worry about it. I have only attained a true stretch goal once in 31 years of racing – Chicago 1998. I had trained my body for over a year for that specific race. In my mind I knew the course and ran smart. My soul was strong because I was at the race with my future wife who was also running and my heart was happy. The weather was in the low 40s at the start with little wind. Special note for the first time marathoner. You don't have to think about your goals, here are your 3 goals. #1 Finish, #2 Set a personal best (this will happen because it is your first marathon), and #3 Have fun! Having fun doesn't always happen while running a marathon so it is a stretch goal.

**Tip #5 – New clothing/shoes** – Never during a key race. Use the distance series or other races to try out new clothes, socks, or shoes. For me, the combination of shoes and socks is the key. Once I find the right combination then I race using this combination only. It also helps to find “magic” shoes! “Magic” shoes are the shoes that you use for speed workouts and races. Your racing attire is a signal to your mind that this isn't just a training run. You mean business.

**Tip #6 – New food/drinks** – Again never during a key race. Use other races to try new foods or drinks. I would challenge all of you to lose your fuel belts during races. There isn't any reason to carry your own water or liquids. For every ounce you add to your weight, you

lose approximately 4 seconds per mile. That is why racing shoes are so light. Before races you should try different pre-race meals. This is usually what works for you before training runs.

**Tip #7 – Nothing can simulate racing** – Only racing can simulate racing. The more you race, the more confidence you will have. Racing conditions your mind more than training runs because you will be running faster than your typical long run. I can remember so many races where my stomach was nervous. I was on edge. I will apologize in advance. When it is race morning, I have my race face on. My thoughts are focused on the race.

**Tip #8 – Danger Spots** – 1) water stops, 2) start of the race, and 3) the finish of the race

Water stops have a lot of congestion, people zigzag, people stop without looking to see if someone is behind them, it is wet, don't make any sudden movements. I am speaking from experience on this one. I slipped and fell at the mile 10 water stop at the San Antonio marathon. Not a fun thing to do during a marathon.

Start of the race is total chaos at times. It is one of the reasons you need to practice racing. Place yourself at the starting line based on the pace you want to run and not with all of your friends. Lots of people no longer even start running until they cross the starting mat because of timing chips that start once you cross the start line. The start of the race is where I have personally seen the most number of people falling down. This is not the way to start a race with bloody knees and hands or getting stepped on.

Finish of the race is less dangerous, but things can happen here too. For example, keep walking in the finish chute. You will be amazed at what happens to your body once you cross the finish line. Your mind has carried you to the finish line and then suddenly your body starts shutting down. If you don't feel good, then when someone asks you, "are okay you?" Tell them, "no." That is why they are there. I have personally had IVs following three marathons and on one of them I waited over an hour before I sought help because I was trying to "tough it out."

Good luck in your upcoming races. Don't be afraid to try new things, so you know what works and what doesn't work before marathon/half-marathon morning arrives.

