

Attention Marathon Dynamics Happy Warriors: Race Day Preparation...The Countdown Begins!

So, you're almost ready. What do you need for raceday? What extra precautions should you take to have the best race or experience possible? Are you prepared for all the different weather conditions possible on race day (as in, have you trained in good and lousy weather)? Have you used fellow runners for group therapy and support? Ready or not, you have to race (unless you have a note from your parents). Here are some things you might need on race day:

Contents of Sport Bag:

- Running shoes(2 pairs)! Not racing flats but training shoes you've broken in with 50 or more miles. A spare pair for after race.

- Pre and post race clothing: warm jacket, light sweater, shirt, warm up pants, fresh socks, briefs or shorts, rain coat or garbage bag (to keep you warm before race while standing at the start and even for the first few miles).

- Race clothing: **Warm** day: singlet (with your club or city name on it), shorts, clean socks, sweatband, briefs or support, sport bra (women only), light running or mesh hat (for sun protection). On a **Cool** day you might want a lightweight 'wicking' long sleeve shirt (you can always tie this around your waist later in race as you warm up), lightweight gloves, light hat. Or use an old T-shirt you don't mind throwing away during the race. Wear your race watch. Waterbottle is optional.

- Race Number: bring with you, or ensure it's pinned to your singlet. Plus bring directions to the race and a pen to record your race time.

- First Aid Kit: Band-aids, aspirin, facial tissue or toilet paper (carry this with you before race in case there's none left in toilets), matches and pin (to break any blisters after race), sunscreen (SPF 15 or more), any medication you usually take.

- Vaseline: Vital item to reduce chafing, friction and blisters. Put on toes, heels, ankles, under arms, on nipples, groin area and other sensitive areas. 'Chafe-Eze' brand is also excellent. • Moleskin or Kurotex (by Dr. Scholl's): Great for areas of feet that tend to blister easily.

Put on before race and Vaseline around covering. It's useless after race when you have blisters. (Kurotex is the better covering because it's thinner).

- Food: Bottle of water, Gatorade, or other 'energy' drink, energy bars, cookies or other snacks for pre and post race.

- Book: For waiting around at the start (like in Boston, NY and races you travel to).

- Towel and shampoo (most races have showers available).

- Name tag on Sport Bag in case it gets lost at the baggage check.

Under any conditions, to have a support crew of friends or family on the course with dry clothes, water, fruit or vaseline, not to mention the moral support they give, is extremely helpful! Both you and your support crew should have an understanding of the course route. You, so you know where to go, and they should know in case they want to follow your progress around the city. Don't leave it up to other participants or volunteer marshals to point you in the right direction. You don't want to run extra miles if you don't have to!

Have a good understanding of your pace and the appropriate km. markers to give you a reference point of where you are on the course in relation to your finishing goal. Whether by Garmin/GPS or by Marathon Dynamics pace bands (best bet!), make sure you have a way of at least sporadically checking your race day progress against your game plan and target time.

Nutritional Requirements:

Begin the week before eating the same diet as always. Don't add anything new or exotic at this point. You're going to eat and drink the same way you did for long runs. **Nothing new**, and certainly not food. No hot Mexican or Thai food the night before (unless your body is used to it), no cereal with milk the morning of; eat only food you ate before long runs.

Proper water hydration is a necessity for all weather conditions, but especially warm and humid temperatures. Your big meal should be eaten the night before (at least 10-12 hours) and should be high in carbohydrates and fluids (and non-alcoholic, though beer is okay as long as you tried it the night before long training runs).

Rest:

Your running has been tapering (decreasing) during the last 14-20 days before the event, thus your energy levels should be high and the desire to run hard during the last few training runs must be kept in check. Save your best for race day! The most important night of sleep comes two days before the event. Often the night before a race, emotions can be high and it's difficult to fall asleep. Don't worry about this, it's natural to be keyed up at this point.

One last thing you might want to do before the race starts is find a quiet place to gather your thoughts and emotions, to meditate almost, and relax your body. The hardwork is behind you and now it's time to enjoy the fruits (and veggies) of your labor. This may only be a toilet cubicle somewhere but hey, a little peace and quiet is a many splendored thing!

Though a relaxed attitude seems like a weird concept at this point, remember that it is not how well you finish, it is not the final result that is critical, but how you conduct yourself to get to the finish. It's the 'zen' of running: focussing on how you are getting there, being in the moment, and visualizing your success. The mind does indeed lead the body.

DAY OF RACE

AT HOME...

- Get up early, do warmup exercises, drink water, eat whatever has worked for you on long training run days (muffin, bagel, toast, cookies, energy bar, banana, Gatorade, juice, coffee, even pancakes), visit toilet
- Put on race and warmup clothing, bib number and pins, grab loaded Sport Bag (details on previous pages) and take off eh!
- Be at start at least ONE HOUR BEFORE RACE. Give yourself ample time to get there, park, and visit toilets.

AT RACE START...

- Visit toilets as much as needed but be prepared to stand in line (try nearby restaurants or hotels)
- Eat whatever food you need, drink more water and/or sports drink.
- Watch time and with 20-30 minutes before the start, strip down to your race clothing, check in your sport bag, keeping just what you'll use in the race. Don't overdress.
- Go for 7-12 minute **warmup** run (if experienced racer) or better yet for most of us is to use the first 1 mile or more of the event as our "warm up" run. Don't overstretch any muscles but do keep the same routine as always including light stretching. Tighten and **double-tie laces** to prevent them coming loose.
- Do one more nature call, and get to the start. If there are signs posted or announcements made about starting in your projected finishing time, put yourself in the correct area. Example: if your projected finishing time is 4 hours, stand in that designated area at the start. You risk being trampled if in the way of faster runners who can be panicky at race starts.

DURING RACE...



- Stick to your planned pace, don't race with the 'rabbits' (except possibly for the "pace bunnies"!). Stay relaxed. Pace from the very beginning is important. Find your rhythm immediately and don't get caught up in the excitement of the start. Conserve your energy for later on!

• Water stations will be set up at regular intervals and remember to drink at every one of them. A trick to making sure you're getting enough water back into your system is to grab the cup of water and continue running. Once you're past the water station and all the confusion, then drink the water. Many runners stop to make sure all the water gets in. Practice drinking water on the run and see how manageable this is for you. If you're starting to slow or tire, try Gatorade or other energy drinks offered to perk yourself up, give you more energy (always best to have tried these during training runs to test your body's reaction to them).

• Watch your split times and guard your pace. Hook up with other runners running your pace and miles will go by easier. Finally, when the going gets tough, remember all the exercises you did for your mind during training. Take the race in we've practiced for just these moments (visualizing-'see' yourself finishing in good time; relaxing parts of your body, starting with your hair!; getting through short distance segments by breaking it down into four 10k races and drawing on past experiences to see you through. Remain positive and this event will pass much quicker than you think. Remember your mental toughness and keep telling yourself in the later stages that you only have a short distance and then you can relax and bask in glory! You'll have earned every step.

- When offered at aid stations, use cool, wet sponges on head and neck.
- Stop at First Aid stations if having problems. Vaseline, bandaids etc. are available.
- Talk to other runners, smile at the spectators and police, **ENJOY YOURSELF!** Relax...

POST RACE

- Once you've crossed the finish line, head directly towards the massage tent if massage is offered (go there ASAP after stretching and picking up your sport bag). If weather is cool, put on warm clothes immediately.
- Take a shower soon after race also...the hot water will relax muscles.
- Head to the refreshment/food tables. Drink! Drink! and Drink! Should you feel like eating, go for it. Bagels, fruit and yogurt are common post-race foods.
- At some point you will have to reload your energy and the best meal is high in carbohydrates. After that, go for the cheesecake! Give yourself permission...
- Stay with friends for awards, clap for the 80 yr.old runner who beat you.
- CELEBRATE your accomplishment! You earned it.
- Get off your feet for a while and rest. Let your body tell you what you need. But then go for a walk to work the stiffness out of your legs.
- Refer back to the page on 'Massage' for recovery.
- Once home, have a hot bath with 4 cups of epsom salts to further relax you. You'll be ready to dance that evening. Keep drinking water all day. Take aspirin or pain reliever if feeling light-headed or feverish.
- Call all your friends to share in your victory. Heck, alert the media. Celebrate again! And when those race photos arrive, order at least one for posterity. You need a visual of your experience.

Ode to a Long Distance Hero

Are we not like heroes from another age, we who run, swim or bike? Warriors who, like our forebears, rise at dawn, faces shrouded with doubt, or with hope of distinguishing ourselves on the battlefield of competition each day? Warriors who absorb ourselves in ritual, in meditation for safe passage, in checking and rechecking gear and clothing. We fit our gauntlets, our mail, our battle dress; we have been here before, perhaps for a shorter contest, but we know these things must be done each time.

Our staging area is awash in color; are they colors of happier times, or our mood today? Either is possible. The vibrant reds, greens, purples we see may just be the colors of good fortune in the minds of their owners. Superstition still abounds for warriors.

Are we not heroes even before reaching battle sites; for it is in hours of training, days, weeks, months on end, that we prove our mettle, our dedication?

Our training, our mentors, our desire, direct us, focus us, to feats of immense physical and mental effort. But like ancient warriors we still require...the test... the battle... the contest of self against ... who? Oneself. One's mind. One's spirit.

Our adversaries today have no swords, no lances,
Rather they are within; the stab of self-doubt, the sting of criticism, the beating of fear defeat us today, or we will defeat them. It is always a choice.

We are the hardest judges on ourselves;
no one would ever dare be so brutal on another. Yet are we on ourselves.

Today we are heroes to the spectators of our contest who shake their heads in bewilderment, yet deep down wish that, they too, could experience the joy, the satisfaction, they know we will have.

The joy of victory today is not just to a skilled few. It is to every competitor. Rarely in life does one have to reach down so deep inside for strength, for endurance, for a miracle. Yet here today each of us will do that. Each of us will fight our own inner battles, our own ghosts that scream at us to quit, to slow down, to find an excuse not to distinguish ourselves.

Today we are heroes because WE are putting ourselves on the line, WE are stepping over our own boundaries. We are creating new horizons for ourselves. And for that, we have won, we are the heroes.

Michael Brennan, Marathon Dynamics Co-Founder