



Tip #7 – PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT WITH PACE RUNS

Long runs at marathon or half marathon pace are an effective way to prepare you for the demands of the event and offer a great physiological and psychological boost. Most of our long runs, however, are done at endurance/easy pace because running too far and too often at marathon or half marathon pace is very demanding on the body. The recovery time required would negate the benefits of the workout.

Instead, occasional shorter **Pace Runs** of 8 – 15 miles are often used to simulate marathon or half marathon pace, and have been inserted into the Beyond training schedules sporadically. The intention of these is to stress your body in a similar way as a marathon or half marathon, but to limit the duration of the run to minimize recovery time.

For the marathon, pace runs are performed at approximately 20 – 30 seconds slower than lactate threshold pace or .45 – 1:30 faster than endurance/easy runs. For the half marathon, they are run about 1:00 – 2:00 faster than endurance/easy runs or just slightly below lactate threshold pace.

Pace runs provide an excellent opportunity to practice drinking and taking energy gels at race pace. They should be done on a measured course so you can feedback on your pace. If you can exercise restraint and stick to marathon or half marathon pace, a race of the appropriate distance is an ideal venue for a pace run. The course is marked, there are plenty of aid stations and other runners to help you along. A marked bike trail is also a suitable place for a pace run.

It is also recommended that the course simulate your marathon or half marathon topography. If you are running a flat course such as Bayshore, it is beneficial to run some of your pace runs on level terrain. Flat courses, especially in a marathon, are not always necessarily easier as you use the same muscles in the exactly way for the entire duration of the race. By the same token, if you are running a hilly marathon such as Kalamazoo or Boston, you want to perform some of your pace runs on hilly terrain.

Reference: Pfitzinger, P., and S. Douglas. 2001. *Advanced Marathonning*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.