

## **LONG TRAINING RUNS – 6 TIPS**

Whether you're training for a half or full marathon, the weekly long run is one of the cornerstones of your training programme. Here are some simple tips for the beginner or improver to help you enjoy and appreciate your long runs. They may seem like common sense, but can easily be overlooked.

### **1. Pace yourself**

The long weekly run should always be at "conversational pace". That is, if you are running with someone, you should be able to hold a conversation without struggling for breath. If you are struggling for breath, you are going too fast and should slow down.

### **2. Find a running buddy**

Some runners are happy with their own company and there's nothing wrong with that. Having company on the long run really does make the time go quicker, so if you're not involved with a local running or jogging group. They will all have people facing the same challenge you are undertaking.

### **3. Increase gradually**

Common sense and all the "credible" coaching advice, advises never increasing your long run by more than 10-20% each week – i.e if your long run now is 5 miles, increase by no more than a mile at a time. If it is 10 miles, then increase by no more than 2 miles. As always, there is no off-the-shelf solution for everybody. Some people are naturally able to increase mileage easily; others need more time to adjust to any extra workload being asked of the body.

### **4. Don't be a slave to mileage!**

Many coaches advocate running your long run by time rather than distance. It requires a slightly different mind set, but that's part of the challenge of marathon training anyway.

### **5. Variety is the spice of life**

Try to seek out new routes for your long run. Some people are happy running the same route all the time, while for others it is a sure fire way to boredom. At least once a month, plan something different and explore! Try these ideas (which can also involve family and friends):

- Simply run your usual or favourite route in reverse.
- Run out somewhere and plan for someone to meet you for a lift home or jump on a bus or train. Or get dropped off and run home (a small bag or backpack with a spare top and snacks could be useful for runs like these).
- Plan a trip to somewhere that will give you a WOW factor. It could be a beach, country park, river or canal trail, or a local hill for example. Just somewhere that is a scenic change from your norm, to add variety to your long runs. If you are increasing your mileage for the first time, this can be a great motivational boost to see how far you've progressed and you can run routes that you might have only considered walking or cycling in the past.

### **6. Stay flexible**

Marathon training involves pushing your limits and thinking and living a little “out of the box”, so on the weeks you are feeling good, when you are getting close to home, take a diversion and add on an extra mile or 10 minutes, but don't tempt fate by taking in too big an extra loop. As you gain experience in all your training you will intuitively know the days when your body is feeling good and you can push yourself. Conversely, if you are having one of those days when you are really struggling, there is nothing wrong in cutting the session short. Don't talk yourself out of training, but pushing the body when it is below par could result in injury or illness or both.

**Good luck with your training and in your race and have fun logging the long runs!**