



TRAINING for the MARATHON: © Steve Manning

30th APRIL 2000, 33 Weeks and Counting

On April 30th next year a marathon will be held over the Sydney 2000 Olympic course. The race will incorporate the Australian Marathon Championships and be the final selection race for the Australian Olympic Team.

Unlike other Olympic events, the marathon trials are open to anyone wanting to participate. No qualification is necessary and you get to compete right alongside Australia's best for that place on the Olympic team. All you have to do is win and run an A-qualifier of 2:14 for men and 2:35 for women and you are guaranteed a place on the Olympic team. If you feel that is a bit out of your reach than do not worry because if you run under 5 hours you will be an official finisher.

This will be your only chance to run over the Olympic marathon course unless you make the Olympic team. Because of this unique opportunity being available once only we have decided to organise special training targeting this marathon. This training article is the start and on October 24th we will conduct our first long run leading up to the race. There will also be two training seminars conducted by successful runners of all abilities who will be helping you prepare and pacing groups in the marathon itself. And of course our regular Tuesday night speed sessions will continue to help you improve all of the required performance factors.

A marathon is a highly challenging and rewarding experience. But with the right training and commitment it is an achievable goal for most people. So why not join us in training for the Olympic Marathon Trials in 8 months time.

STEP 1: Making the commitment

To run the marathon successfully requires respect for the distance and effort required. Years of moderate running can ensure that you can finish a 10km or half marathon even if you're training has been poor. Marathons require many months of consistent training geared specifically towards completing 42.2 kilometres. Consistency and hard training will not always guarantee that you can even finish a marathon, but without it you will have little chance. So before you send in your entry, look at the sacrifices you need to make, and commit yourself to a minimum of sixteen weeks of focused training for the marathon.

STEP 2: Evaluate your ability and experience

Before setting goals or planning your training it is important to look at where you are now. If you have not started running you will find things much harder than someone who has been running consistently for years. If you have already run a marathon it will be easier knowing that you have done it all before.

Some runners will always be faster than others no matter how much training they do. This is the unfairness of genetics. You can not fight it but you can stay focused on doing the best you can do rather than comparing yourself to others. There is nothing more pitiful than seeing a runner trying to break three hours by doing the same training as 'Deek'.

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Your unique characteristics of ability and experience should be the basis upon which you design your training program. This means that two people trying to achieve the same time will not always train the same way. A classic example of this is the comparison between male and female athletes.

Women are about twenty to thirty minutes slower than males over the marathon. That means that a woman who runs under 3 hours is about equal with a male who can run under 2:40. And this means that women who run three hours will require more training, more commitment and more innate ability than a man who can run three hours. This is reflected by the fact that women will generally have better pace judgement and finish better than the males they have been running with in a race.

The final component of ability involves the other things that are going on in your life. Few people are able to train full-time for a marathon. We have to fit training around family, work, study, social commitments and other interests. Elite marathoners do not have a balanced lifestyle. It is not healthy to become obsessed with the demands of training to the detriment of the rest of your commitments in life. Look at what else you have going on and structure your training accordingly. That way you can avoid divorce, you will keep your job, and you will not get chronic fatigue syndrome.

STEP 3: Setting Goals

Goals will help you maintain motivation by keeping you focused on what you want to achieve.

Goals should be **specific and acknowledged**. Write them down where you can see them frequently. As you reach each goal tick it off so that you can see what you have accomplished and begin to focus on your next task.

Goals should be **challenging** otherwise there is nothing to make you work hard enough to improve. At the same time goals must be **realistic** or you will give up before you get to the finish.

Goals must also be **flexible** because things do not always go your way. Reassess your goals as you go and you will be more likely to run to your potential. There is nothing worse than finishing knowing you could have done better if you had just gone out at a more sensible pace or tried for a better time.

The most important goal is the one you choose for your final goal race, which in this case is the marathon. Set yourself three levels of goals: satisfactory, challenging and ultimate.

Satisfactory goals are ones that you feel fairly confident of achieving even if your training does not go totally to plan. They should still be an accomplishment greater than you have done recently, requiring an improvement in your current level of fitness.

Challenging goals are the ones you really want to aim for. They require you to be able to do most of your training without injury, illness or overtraining. You

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have to work hard and consistently to achieve these goals. Other factors not in your control like poor weather or a fall will put these goals out of reach. If you have been realistic about your ability and everything goes right in training and in the race itself then you should achieve your challenging goal.

Ultimate goals are only achieved on rare occasions. They should be on the edge of what you think is possible. Training is perfect, race day is cool with no wind, and you run tactically well and feel fantastic and achieve your ultimate goal. Ultimate goals are important as a reminder of what you might be able to achieve.

Goals should reflect the race you are running. Hilly courses will not give you as good a time as a flat course. Races in hot weather locations will be slower than cool weather races. Trying to run a PB on a hard course is unrealistic. You must compare efforts not just times.

Goals can be based on performance or competition. **Performance goals** might be to run under a certain time or to finish the race strong. Make sure with performance goals that you run on a course which is accurately measured. **Competition goals** focus on a certain placing and are not always in your control if others run better than expected.

You should set goals for all of your leadup races. You can not run at your best in every race and your goals should reflect this with more challenging goals in the most important races. Each race that you do should be another step towards your goal race. These races are important for many reasons and particularly for keeping track of your progress towards achieving your goals in the final goal race.

Training goals will also help you progress towards your final goal. They may be meeting mileage targets or running specific times in a regular speed session. Training goals are important to keep you focused on the process required and not just the outcome you want to achieve.

STEP 4: Planning your training program

Marathon training is different from training for shorter distances in the importance of your long run and the volume of training required. Some people confuse this with meaning that mileage is the only important thing. The factors, which are important, are: weekly mileage; number of sessions per week; speedwork; distance of long runs; tempo sessions and speed over shorter race distances.

Training to finish in under 5 hours

The cut off time for the Sydney 2000 Marathon trials is 5 hours. If you do not think that you can train to run at least 5 hours then it might be best to reconsider running. 5 hours is slower than 7 min/km. A brisk walk the whole way can achieve this time.

Training to finish under 5 hours will take 40 to 60km/week over four to five sessions. One weekly speed session and fortnightly long runs will be the main focus. Long Runs should be planned run/walks just like the race will be.

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The main requirement before running under 5 hours is being healthy and uninjured. People who run between four and five hours are really training for ultramarathons because they are out there for nearly twice as long as some other runners. They may not be genetically designed for running long distances or are not as fit or as young as others. Any disruption to their consistent training will hit them harder. To finish a marathon is a fantastic achievement at any level but to run four to five hours is even more of a challenge and accomplishment.

Training to finish under 4 hours

For many novice marathoners this is the first time goal they set after running to just finish their first marathon. They know they can do the distance and they have been training for longer and gained much experience in that time. More gifted runners may run this time or even faster in their first marathon but they will likely to have been running over shorter distances for many years.

Training will consist of six or seven sessions per week totaling between 60 and 80 kilometres. Long runs of 25 to 32km will still only be every fortnight but they will race more frequently than those training for five hours will. Speed sessions will be more specific and not much different to those running under three hours except for the pace they run.

Runners should be able to run close to 50 minutes for 10km if they expect to run under four hours.

Training to finish under 3:30 (5 min/km)

Five minutes per kilometre pace will give you a time just under 3:30. This is an achievable time for most runners. It requires significant training, experience and ability but with time most marathoners can achieve it. Running at 5 min/km is no longer a slow pace. Mentally it is no longer about just keeping running for a long time. Pace judgement and concentration for the whole distance is required so that runners do not slow down too much when it gets hard after 30km. Training every day of the week for 70 to 100 kilometres is required. A second speed session may be added and long runs will now be weekly with a race every four weeks.

Runners must be able to run 45 minutes for 10km or 1:40 for the half marathon if they want to run under 3:30.

Training to finish in 3:00 to 3:10

Many runners get caught in this range of just over 3 hours without ever achieving their ultimate goal. Experience alone may help you progress from 3:30 to close to 3 hours without any significant change in your training. The level of sacrifice and ability to run faster is often beyond most runner's ability.

To run close to 3 hours you will have to be able to run close to 40 minutes for 10km and under 1:30 for the half marathon.



Training to finish under 3 hours

Fewer than 10% of marathoners ever break this magic barrier. It is physically beyond most runner's capability even if they were able to train full time with all of the best technical and coaching support.

Many runners who break three hours will be training twice a day for a few days each week. Their mileage will be between 80 and 120 kilometres per week. Long runs will be averaging around 30 kilometres with some even further. Two speed sessions every week should be nearly mandatory with a third tempo session in the weeks that they do not race.

Do not try to break 3 hours until you have run close to 38 minutes for 10km and 1:25 for the half. Many runners will not achieve this time on their first attempt. For women a time under 3 hours is the ticket required to membership of the elite ranks.

Training to finish in 2:48 (4 min/km)

Four minutes per kilometre and twenty minutes every five kilometres is perhaps the easiest time to pace yourself evenly. Runners will often struggle to run under 3 hours, but once done they will often find it easier to get down to 2:48.

Three or four days each week will have a second recovery session of between five and eight kilometres. Total mileage will now be 120 to 150 km per week. A mid week longer run will double as a near threshold session.

These runners will look the part and be well above average in ability. They will know how to race to get the best out of themselves and reach their potential. They will be competitive in many minor events and will know what it is like to win races.

To run under 2:48 will take a 10km time of under 36 minutes and a half marathon of under 80 minutes.

Training to finish under 2:30

Runners capable of running under 2:30 for a marathon are the elite of the sport. This time means running FAST the whole way at close to 3:30/kilometre. Running is no longer just a recreational activity, it is now central to their image of who they are.

For women this is a time giving international success. They will be able to be professional athletes commanding appearance money at races all over the world.

Men who run under 2:30 will be invited to fill out the fields at major events. These men will be used to supplementing their income with prizes from other races. They will be placing at or winning races regularly. The sacrifice required to go faster will infringe on other areas of their lives. Even talented men will often not get much faster unless they make some major changes to their lifestyles.

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Mileage will be between 120 and 180 kilometres per week and they will be running twice a day nearly every day of the week. A time of 32 minutes for 10km is necessary and they will have to race track and cross country to improve their speed. They will do the occasional long run of forty kilometres or more.

These runners will often be able to tell if their pace is more than five seconds per kilometre off what they want to run. They will have near complete control of their performances. They are no longer running for their health.

Training to finish under 2:20

This time used to be considered good enough to be internationally competitive. While this is no longer the case you will be invited to run in international events with free airfares and accommodation. Runners capable of this time will be semi-professional. They will be knocking on the door of national team selection and will receive all of the benefits of sports medicine and coaching support. All athletes of this ability should be able to get sponsorship for their running equipment.

Their training will rarely drop under 160 kilometres per week and they will top the 200 kilometres on occasion. Twice daily sessions will be a matter of routine. Long Runs for these athletes may exceed the marathon distance. Recovery sessions will be at four minutes per kilometre. Training will include regular massage and physiotherapy as injury prevention.

These runners must be able to run under 30 minutes for 10km.

Running 2:20 requires complete commitment to your running goals. The benefits of running this fast will also be much greater. Runners of this ability will expect to win most races they enter.

Training to finish under 2:10

Running 2:10 is faster than 3:05/kilometre for 42.2 kilometres. These runners will be running in major championships. They will be paid more just to run in a race than we may earn in a year. If these runners work it is just because they would be bored otherwise and it will certainly not be full-time. Pat Carroll, Steve Monaggetti, Robert DeCastella are names known to every runner. Their sponsorship may extend beyond the sport to unrelated companies and financial institutions.

These runners are role models to us all. They work harder on a regular basis to achieve excellence than any other sportsperson. They can run for two hours within a few percent of their maximum heartrate. Running this fast takes courage, mental strength and copious amounts of ability. They deserve all of the benefits and accolades they receive and then some. It is through their achievements that we can measure our own. Go out and try to run even one lap of 400 metres at the pace they run 100 times that distance. You can see that the 74 seconds required is hard even when sprinting the whole way.

These runners will run 180 to 220 kilometres a week all year round. They can run under 28minutes for 10km and will be competitive at most distances from 1500M

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on up. Runners of this calibre do not come around every generation. We have been extremely fortunate in Australia to have so many great runners over the last few decades.

Training for the marathon takes a real commitment to put in the hard yards. When planning your program you must first look at your own ability and experience and then look at what is required to achieve your goals.

In the next issue the second installment of this training article will be available and it will focus on the specific training required and how to set out your long-term schedule and daily program. In the meantime sample schedules will be available on our webpage at <http://www.thehub.com.au/~running/>. Handouts will also be available at our long run series starting on October 24th and at our training seminars planned for January 31 and April 3.

Join us in training for the Sydney 2000 Olympic Marathon Trials on April 30th.

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