



## **Pace Yourself to a PB!**

by Steve Manning

Running a personal best is achieved through a combination of factors. Training hard, avoiding injury, experience, genetics, luck, the weather and the course all play a part in achieving your goals. But the factor that torpedoes most PB attempts is poor pacing and tactics.

If you miss a PB because of poor pacing it is not because you were not capable of achieving your goal, it is because you just did not run smart. That means it was a lost opportunity. So follow these suggestions to make sure you run as fast as you are able.

### **Learn Pace Judgment**

The way to get the best possible time in a race is to run as even a pace as possible. The most common mistake is starting too fast. The excitement and atmosphere of a race makes it feel easy at the start. Run in a number of lead up races so you can learn to cope with the atmosphere and learn what it feels like to start at pace. Keep a record of your splits during the race so that you can identify if you have done something wrong and learn how to run better next time.

### **No Time Cushion**

Some people mistakenly believe that a time cushion should be created to ensure against the inevitable slowdown in the last few kilometres. Physiologically this is wrong as too much glycogen is burned initially and the runner can never recover the balance of fat metabolism. In short races it is not so important, but over marathon distances it is possible to completely deplete your glycogen reserves. By running less than 10 seconds per kilometre too fast in the first five kilometres you will make it impossible to run to your potential.

### **Run Negative Splits**

The best way to pace yourself is to start slower than goal pace, run 5 to 30 km slightly faster, and finish at pace or faster. This means that you are behind time until 30km but by then you are travelling faster than goal pace and can still slow down and achieve your goal. It is also a lot of motivation to be passing people later in the race and physically much easier to handle. Consult the examples shown to create your own ideal pacing strategy.

### **Run a Predictor Race**

To race successfully you must have a realistic idea of how fast you can run. Just because you have done a lot of training does not mean you can race fast. The best way to identify what you can do is to run a predictor race. That is a time trial over a shorter distance that you can calculate out to your goal race. If you run this a few weeks out from your goal race you can find out how fast you can run by using the formula shown. Your mileage in the previous few months should let

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you know you can make the distance. If you have had interruptions to your training or were unable to do sufficient long runs then add some extra time onto your predictions. Runners can also vary in their ability over different distances.

### **Have Flexible Goals**

You must adjust your goals and your pacing based on the conditions and how you feel on the day. If you try to stick to your preconceived goals despite conditions or injury you will blow up even worse. Sometimes you will have a bad day or go through a rough phase in the race. By adjusting pace based on how you feel you can minimise the impact on your time.

### **Learn Racing Tactics**

You might think that tactics are useful only for those in contention to win a race. However they can help any runner of any ability to focus on running strong by using their competitors as motivators. Running tactics are skills used to get the most out of your performance in response to a competitive situation. Pace judgement is the basis of all tactics but real tactical excellence is running the right pace at the right time rather than just following a pre-planned schedule. Marathons are largely a competition against yourself and the distance rather than your competitors but tactics can still help.

### **Tactical Considerations**

Some important tactical considerations are: knowing the course so you don't get lost; knowing your competitors strength and weaknesses so you can evaluate how to run against them; visualising a preconditioned response to cope with any problems that may arise such as blisters or tripping; keeping positive thoughts at all times; and running effectively. These tactics must be practised to be mastered. Look and see who runs a smart race and learn from them. Learn what your tactical strengths are and utilise them frequently. By concentrating on catching the runners ahead, and breaking away from the runners you are with, it will be much easier to continue to run strong all the way to the finish and run a faster time.

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