



# PREPARING FOR RACE DAY

## FINAL KEY RUNS AND SESSIONS

### How to reduce your training in the final weeks?

I can hear the gremlins talking to you now and asking, have you done enough training? Should you squeeze in one more long run to be sure you will be ok on race day? Do I need to make up for that week I missed when I had a cold? These are common worries in the final weeks but eventually, with all training, less must become more. It's time to let the body start to recover and build its strength ready for race day.

Remember, the training you do today will take 3-4 weeks to have a real long-term effect on fitness so cramming in extra training in the final weeks will only lead to diminishing returns and fatigue come race day.

A clever half marathon taper sees you protecting your fitness and even feeling great as your body starts to thank you for gradually having to cope with less training. So lets organise that taper now by considering the following, run your longest half marathon training runs 9-10 days out from race day.

### What should my final week of training look like?

The simple answer is easy! My big tip is don't taper too much...yes you can have too many rest days and feel super sluggish by race day. Avoid this happening by keeping the consistency of running the same but reducing the volume dramatically; Some light 30 minute runs in place of your usual bigger runs or sessions is ideal, but avoid doing nothing as this will lead to stale legs and a mind questioning whether you can still run!

I often advise runners to jog for 30 mins the day before the race and stretch. It helps you to feel loose on race day and can calm the nerves a little.

### How can I calm those half marathon nerves in the final week?

Let's be totally honest here, the nerves will kick in at some point and this is a good thing! It's certainly totally normal but we need to get things in perspective. Take time out in the week at some point and review your training over a coffee. Remember your best long runs and sessions. Concentrate on the positives of the training journey.

It's also time to surround yourself with positive people, those that are excited by the thought of race day and want to support you.

It's time to believe in your fitness and begin looking forward to the challenge.

## **Nutrition - how much should I eat during my taper?**

This is a great question and I see so many runners getting this wrong during the taper ruining months of hard work. It's all actually really simple - just eat normally! If you gradually reduce the volume and intensity of your training but keep the intake of food the same, a natural carbo-loading process will happen.

Your body needs the quality calories to keep your glycogen (carbohydrate stores) topped up and you feeling great in training and on race day.

Our simple catch phrase is 'never hungry, never over full' and grazing throughout the day with snacks and sensible main meals will work well for you. It's definitely not the time to eat less and worry about putting on weight. The reality is you will feel empty on race day if you cut back.

A taper really is about training less, eating normally and seeing your recovery and energy stores rocket.... trust yourself!

The day before race day phase out protein from lunchtime onwards and just eat/graze on carbohydrate. Replace the protein on the plate with carbs and you have created a mini carbo-loading moment without stuffing in 10 plates of pasta and five bread rolls leaving you bloated and uncomfortable!

My top nutrition tip though is 'eat your normal pre-race or pre long run breakfast'. Don't suddenly change what has worked so well for you in training. You want your body to feel normal and comfortable on the start line...

## **Sleep & Rest**

You always need to respect this key element as a runner if you want to improve. Try to get a few early nights in race week and definitely protect that immune system in the final weeks. Late nights and picking up a cold will wreck race day.

Many will lie opened eyed counting miles the night before race day but if you slept well earlier in the week, the hours are banked and you will feel fine on race day.

## **Getting your kit right!**

It sounds obvious but many make the mistake of buying new shoes at the or wearing new socks, shorts and tops because they want to look good. Keep it simple and wear the shoes you ran your last few long runs in and make sure any clothing has been worn and washed a few times before you race in it. Watch the weather forecast but have options ready as who knows what will be thrown your way and the race will go on come rain or shine!

## **Your race strategy**

However great you feel, run at the pace you have practiced NOT faster. After building into the pace you should then look to lock into the km or mile splits that have become familiar to you in the half marathon

pace sessions and longer runs.

Definitely DON'T try to bank faster miles and get ahead of the schedule.

The best athletes in the world often run negative splits and this simply means they run the second half of the race a little quicker than the first. It works.

**GOOD LUCK TEAM!**