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By Bruce Deacon

Finding the Right Pace

Determining your pace for the marathon is a challenge. The math is easy (see [here](#)). The tough part is knowing whether you are truly capable of your hitting your goal.

In my second marathon, I had set the goal of breaking 3 hours. It was a lofty goal considering my previous best time was 3:30. But there was no talking sense into me; I wanted that sub 3 hour time. I dashed off well on pace for my goal; however, my body just wasn't ready to lop half an hour from my time. In the end, I ran one of the toughest races of my life and took 2 minutes off my best.

So how do you know if you can reasonably hit your time? The best way to tell is to do a shorter race. By running a 10k or a half marathon, you get a good indication for how your training has gone. By using a running equivalency calculator, you can determine how your time over a shorter distance is likely to translate to a marathon. A Google search will locate many of the ones on-line. Some are better than others, so average the times from a couple for a more accurate indication of how fit you really are. An example of one of these programs can be found at [here](#).

If you can't find a convenient race, you can assess your readiness by doing a track workout. Use the equivalency calculator backwards by inputting your marathon goal time. This should show you a 10k equivalent time. For instance, if you are shooting for a 4 hour marathon, then you should be able to run a 51:00 10k. That means that you should feel fairly strong doing a workout of 4-5 times 1600 at your 10k pace of 8:13/mile. If this is a breeze, then you should be well on your way to a 4 hour time. On the other hand, if you finish up seeing stars and throwing up, then you probably either have the flu or an unrealistic marathon goal.

Now a word of caution. The equivalency calculators assume that you are equally strong at all distances. You aren't. I am more of a marathoner, so I can usually run faster for the marathon than my equivalent 5k or 10k times. Also, some of the programs are more accurate than others. If the time that you use for your equivalency calculation is old or run on a tough course or hot day, then it will definitely affect your marathon prediction.

Now is the time to objectively measure how realistic your goal is. If you have been a bit too ambitious, or your training has not quite gone as planned, you can then decide if you need to re-adjust your marathon goal and pace yourself accordingly on race day.

How do I get faster in 7 weeks?

With the clock ticking to race day, the question is how do you improve in the limited time remaining. The fastest way to improve is to run fast. If you are following the on-line programs, then you have been running some quality workouts for the last few months. These are the key sessions needed to improve your fitness.

Approach these sessions fairly rested. Slow down your easy day runs so that you arrive at the hard workouts ready to work hard. Try to find a training partner for these sessions to keep you honest. Even better, join a training group where there are a number of runners to push you along. You don't want to finish these runs losing your lunch, but you want to be a bit stiff, sore and tired the next day. You want to feel like you have worked hard.

Get in your long runs. These should be run about 30-45 seconds per mile slower than your marathon pace. If you are not sure how fast you are running, try to pick a route where there is km markers or hit a track mid run to get a feel for your pace. It is easy to either run too slow on your long runs or to turn them into a race. Either will cost you on race day.

Stay healthy. Every day you lose due to sickness or injury is a day lost in getting faster. So, be smart and take care of the basics. Eat well, get lots of sleep, wash your hands frequently, and cut back if you feel you are coming down with something.

Wednesday Night Speed Work

If you live in the Lower Mainland, you are welcome to drop in for a coached group speed work session. We meet every Wednesday night at 6 pm in the parking lot of the Trout Lake Community Centre. The drop in price is \$10/session. There are runners with a whole range of abilities, so come and join us for a good hard workout.

Questions, Questions, Questions

Do you have questions about your training? Now is the time to ask. Email Bruce Deacon at coachbruce@royalvictoriamarathon.com.