

The Marathon: An Alternate Approach

The marathon is a beast, but training for the marathon may conquer even more aspirants as they succumb to repetitive stress injuries from long mileage training runs in the weeks and months leading up to the event. An alternative approach is shorter, more intense run workouts as well as cross-training, such as cycling, to build cardiovascular fitness and endurance. These types of workouts help the hopeful marathoner avoid the wear and tear of endless training miles, which can lead to injuries or prevent optimal performance on race day.

The key ingredient to this recipe for success on race day is the run/walk method, a.k.a. the Galloway method (<http://www.jeffgalloway.com/>). This is not the correct or preferred approach for many marathoners, partly because it's very bruising to the ego to be seen walking in the first few miles of the marathon. However, if you start running at your goal pace, and mix in walking at regular intervals, you will allow your muscles enough time to recover in the early stages of the marathon. In the later stages of the marathon, from the half-way point to the finish, your body will not suffer as badly as virtually everyone else on the course, and you can turn on the gas to finish strong.

The benefits, at least in my experience, of the combination of low-mileage training with the run/walk method on race day have been phenomenal. In my first attempt at the Honolulu Marathon, I trained vigorously for months, culminating with a fast 23 mile run one month before the event in 2005. That led to injury and I couldn't run for a month before the race. I woke up on the day of the race and decided to do it anyways, and struggled to finish in 3:59:06. I gave up on the marathon until last year when Jeff Galloway visited Momentum MultiSport to discuss his run method two days before the marathon. With no run training and hung-over, I ran/walked the marathon to finish with a time of 3:35:20 (using another person's donated entry).

This year, I ran 8 miles twice since June, and regular ran the 4 miles around Diamond Head (maybe twice a week in the last two months). On race day, I felt fresh and fast, and started with 9 minutes running and 1 minute walking. About halfway I cut the walking to 45 seconds, and still felt great. At mile 18, I hit my stride and ran about 7 minute miles to complete the race in 3:20:35. I don't recommend the low-mileage training for everyone, but I hear so many stories of people who get injured and can't compete in the marathon at all. So here's an alternative approach to consider for your own marathon...

