

Managing the Marathon: Mile-by-mile strategy

By Bob "Wish" Wischnia

Devinesports.com Editor

Congratulations. You've made the commitment to running a marathon. It's a tremendous undertaking that will present numerous challenges for you, but none are insurmountable.

But the marathon will probably be the longest and most difficult race you will ever do. Let's face it: 26.2 miles is a long way to run. Heck, it's a long way to drive.

Assuming you've trained well, done all the long runs and rested for the race, you should do just fine. But you will need to stay positive and focused on your goal of finishing and don't make any major blunders. If you can do all that, you will make it all the way to the finish line with a smile on your face.

Here's how to run the marathon, broken into manageable segments:

Lining up and starting

Enter the starting corral a good 10-15 minutes before the race will begin. If it's chilly, wear extra clothes and keep them on until right before the start. Before the race begins, you can toss them. Continue drinking.

- Position yourself properly. Find one of the big pace signs that closely approximates the time you expect to run and line up near it. If you're planning to run with a pace group, line up with the other runners in that group. The pace group leader should have a sign indicating the designated pace. Once you find the group, introduce yourself to everyone in your pace group. You'll be spending a lot of time with these folks so get to know them and offer your encouragement that you can all make it to the finish together.
- Don't panic. Once the race begins, you may find—if it's a major marathon-- that you're not even moving forward for a few minutes. At the start of major city marathons, the field of runners is so huge that there's almost always a back up of runners. If you're wearing a computer timing chip on your shoe, the clock won't start timing you until you cross the starting line. So you won't be losing any time. Relax.