Race Day Tips

You've become comfortable with running, mastered your form, trained for weeks, and you've got a new pair of running shoes. Now it's the day of the race, and you've entered and gotten your race number. Following are a few pieces of advice to help you reach the finish line intact.

1. On the night before the race, assemble any items you'll need for the race (figure A) -- running shoes and clothes, entry forms or race number, money (if needed), first-aid items and sunscreen.

2. Eat a good meal the night before the race, but nothing too heavy. Drink plenty of water. Get to bed early.

3. On race day, get up at least three hours before the race. Eat a light, lowfat breakfast and drink some water. A little coffee is okay, but avoid drinking large amounts as it is dehydrating.

4. To help ensure a worry-free entry and start, get to the race at least an hour ahead of start time.

5. Do some light warm-up runs and stretches. Don't simply stand still. Walk for a while, then jog, then stretch. Try to keep moving.

6. Just before the race, run slowly up to race pace, then back down.

7. Try to be at the starting line at least fifteen minutes before start time or the start of your wave. (Larger races may be staggered into separate groups, or waves, of runners according to ability.) Getting to the start line early will help avoid a crush if there's a crowd.

8. Start the race slowly to conserve energy . Avoid wasting energy by fighting through a crowd near the start. Wait for runners to thin out, then pick up your pace if desired.

9. Stay focused during the race. Think about your pace and your interval times. Be mindful of the runners around you so you don't get tripped up. Concentrate on your running form.

10. Drink water along the route, but don't fight to get into crowded water areas. Wait for an open opportunity.

11. At the halfway point, pick up your pace and hold it steady. This can be like one of your tempo runs during training. This is where the endurance you've developed pays off.

12. After the race, catch your breath, then do some light stretching. You're going to be sore after a race, but stretching may reduce that a bit.

13. You've burned a lot of calories in the race, so try to eat a meal within an hour or so.

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Author: Bob Glover, Jack Shepherd
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