



marathon tips

BY EMILY HARWOOD

Athletic accomplishments bring people a sense of pride. Working to achieve a goal as an individual or a team and then achieving that goal is very rewarding. This is especially true of running a marathon. Only 1/10 of one percent of people on Earth have completed the 26.2 mile race. You may not be able to climb Mt. Everest in your lifetime, but with the right training and attitude, you can become part of a very small club: marathon runners.

Runners from around the world and local areas alike, will hit the streets on Sunday, February 24th for the 44th annual New Orleans Mardi Gras Marathon. Fred Klinge is originally from New Orleans and moved back to the area just nine days before Hurricane Katrina. Fred, who is currently certified by the American College of Sports Medicine as a Health/Fitness Instructor, has completed twenty five marathons and participated in the 1984 U.S. Olympic Marathon Trials in Buffalo, New York; has developed suggested approved training schedules for the marathon and half-marathon distances, which can be found at www.mardigrasmarathon.com/training.shtml.

Here are some important tips Klinge recommends for marathon runners:

For new runners, an important first step is to visit a specialty shoe store that caters to runners and is staffed by experienced joggers or walkers. Find shoes that are comfortable right off the bat. Don't expect to be able to break them in. If they're uncomfortable when you're walking around the store, they won't be comfortable when you're running a marathon in them, either.

Two very important components of training are commitment and camaraderie. You'll need support from your loved ones as you spend hours and hours training for the 26.2 mile race. While supportive loved ones are important, it's also helpful to train with other aspiring marathon runners, so that you can support, encourage, and motivate each other on days when you might be feeling lazy.

When you are training, keep detailed records of your distances and times. In addition to this, keep a log of how you're feeling, what shoes you're wearing, as well as weather conditions. If you run into injury problems, a log can serve as a helpful guide for you to determine what triggers the injury.

One of the most common mistakes beginning runners make is doing too much, too soon, which can result in injury and discouragement. Rest is very important, especially in the early stages of running. Taking intermittent days off during training allows the body to recover from the stress of this new exercise and prepare for the next workout. Elevated heart rates and bouts of insomnia are common signs of overtraining. And if your muscles and joints are sore, listen to your body's warnings.

Take the day off before the race with complete rest and drink lots of fluids. And get some sleep! The amount of necessary sleep can vary from person to person, but you should know your body well enough to know how much sleep you should be getting the night before the race.

The morning of the race, make sure that you eat the right foods. A lot depends on how your stomach reacts to running, but most people need three to four hours to digest food before a hard exertion. You will definitely want to avoid

dairy products and fatty foods because they are harder to digest than carbohydrates and proteins. During the run, your performance can be enhanced by taking water or sports drinks, as well as carbohydrate-based snacks (energy gels, fruit, and sugary snacks) at planned intervals. Try to experiment with this during your training sessions to see which foods & beverages work best for you.

All of these preparatory steps help not just to physically prepare you for running a marathon, but to mentally prepare you as well. Training for months will give you the confidence to know you can finish the race. When your body gets tired during the race, as it invariably will, you'll know that you can finish because of all the training you've done.

The Mardi Gras Marathon, like many of its kind, offers a "half-marathon" and a "5-K" race for those unable to go the full distance. For a non distance runner, it is much too late to consider training for the 2008 Mardi Gras Marathon, (typical marathon training takes approximately sixteen to twenty two weeks) but many people are more than able to attempt the 13.1 mile, half marathon or the 5K course, which covers just 3.1 miles.

The half marathon is a popular race for beginning runners because it is long enough to be a serious challenge but does not require the same level of training that a marathon does. And the 5K is a perfect distance for a relative novice.

When the race begins, proceed at your normal pace and don't get sucked into trying to keep up with those who are going at a faster pace. Most of all concentrate on enjoying the event and finishing the race! **HFM**