

## Secrets of Success

In the fall of 1979, Bill Wenmark, a former ice hockey player from Deephaven, Minnesota, decided to run his first marathon, despite having trained only a few dozen miles in preparation. He finished, but it took him nearly six hours, and the experience was less than pleasant. "The three days after the race were the most miserable days of my life," Wenmark recalls. "Every bone ached. Every muscle ached. Even my fingernails ached."

Nevertheless, Wenmark continued in the sport and currently heads the American Lung Association Running Club (ALARC). He now trains new runners to finish the Twin Cities and Grandma's Marathons. "One of the reasons I'm successful with first timers is that I made every mistake preparing for my first 26-miler," he says.

Wenmark uses a simple schedule involving a long run each weekend with rest days twice a week: Mondays and Fridays. Tuesday and Thursday runs are 6 to 8 miles; Wednesday runs reach 13 miles by the end of the buildup. He also recommends additional cross-training workouts, usually on an exercise bike, but also some strength training.

The training program works. Through the 1998 Twin Cities Marathon, Wenmark had coached 1832 runners to finish their first marathon. Of that number, only 8 failed to finish, and 5 of those succeeded in later tries. Wenmark points to **15 secrets of success for first-time marathoners**.

- 1. Commit yourself.** Run your first marathon for the right reasons. *You* must want to run the marathon-not because your boss did it or your spouse did it.
- 2. Loosen up.** Recipe training schedules are fine, but everyone is different. Be willing to adapt your training to your ability and time availability.
- 3. Seek support.** Look for others to run with. Join a class or a running club. Long runs go more smoothly if you don't have to tackle them alone.
- 4. Get smart.** Marathoning is a mental discipline, not just a physical one. Read books. Attend clinics. Ask questions of experienced runners and coaches. Get the best advice.
- 5. Think positive.** *You are* a special person. Reward yourself with self-praise as you achieve each interim goal en route to the marathon.
- 6. Don't overtrain.** Twenty miles is plenty for your longest training distance. Save the sacred territory between 20 and 26 miles for the race itself. This will make finishing the full marathon an extra-special experience.
- 7. Practice hard.** The marathon offers a classic example of success rewarded. If you want to be successful in anything, you must practice.
- 8. Train thoroughly.** Shortcuts don't work. You can't cram for a marathon.
- 9. Pretrain.** Everything will go more easily if you develop a proper level of base training before starting the marathon buildup. Proper preparation will help prevent injury.
- 10. Try it out.** Test anything you might encounter during a marathon in practice. This includes everything from race equipment (shoes, socks, racing gear, sunglasses), endurance drinks or gels, to prerace meals.
- 11. Drink up.** Learn how to drink on the run, specifically how to *stop* running to drink more. If it's going to take you five or more hours to finish, you may also want to practice eating (and more importantly *what* to eat) on the run.
- 12. Watch your weight.** Seek an ideal weight for your height and build. You don't want to carry extra pounds, but you also don't want to diet-or risk dehydration- to lose too much weight.
- 13. Cross-train.** Doing other aerobic activities occasionally, such as cycling, swimming, or even walking can help you recover on non-running days. Weight training provides the upper body strength needed for the final miles. (Yes, your arms also get tired during a 26.2 mile run!)
- 14. Slow down.** Beginners should avoid speedwork. Concentrate on finishing your first marathon, not finishing it fast.
- 15. Get an attitude.** Learn to love your new lifestyle. Discover the meaning of good health. Focus on the final goal: the marathon finish line.