

# Know your limits, train wisely for marathons

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**R**unners who registered for the Jan. 17 Chevron Houston Marathon are now in a critical period in their training, a period in which they can control their destiny for success or failure in going the grueling 26.2-mile distance.

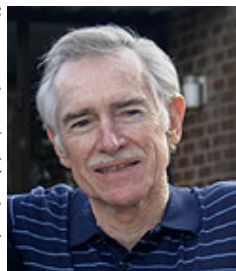
The Houston marathon race registration opened July 17 and reached its limit within 24 hours. Some runners rushed to register only to find themselves now hobbled or injured in these last crucial training months. They hope the injury is transient and will fix itself with special exercises; they look for “quick fixes” or miracle cures to heal them by race day. Chances are they will have to forfeit their registration fees for 2010.

Some beginning and experienced marathoners join training groups for sound advice about training and avoiding injury. Such groups are invaluable experiences, particularly because of the enthusiasm of the groups and the camaraderie that develops. That enthusiasm and camaraderie help on race day, too, to get them past “the wall” at 20 miles.

In the 10 marathons I’ve finished, I trained myself, following religiously one of the training schedules in “Jeff Gal-

loway’s Book on Running, 1st edition” (Shelter Press 1984). I used the 1984 edition because in Galloway’s second edition (2002), he included schedules for the half-marathon but not the full marathon.

To follow Galloway’s schedule and to train solo, however, you must be committed to the schedule and disciplined. You must not become a victim of Demon Sloth. You must train no matter what the weather. You must not miss a training session



no matter what is going on at work, even if it means you have to get up at 3 a.m. to log your miles. You might have to skip some of those wild Christmas parties.

At 70, I have given up marathons. I don’t have the time to train. More significantly, my old body just can’t take it anymore. I don’t have those good “slow twitch” muscles of a long-distance runner or the genes.

If I were training for the Jan. 17 Houston marathon and following Galloway’s schedule “To Finish,” I would be in week 23 of a 30-week training schedule. The schedule “To Finish” prescribes building up and running the complete 26.2 marathon distance three weeks before the event and steadily tapering for the event to prevent injury.

Following Galloway’s schedule in week 23, I would run 4 miles on Monday, Wednesday, Friday and a long Sunday run of 22.

It is crucial to build up slowly to the longer runs. Run-

ning too hard or too long in the early weeks of marathon training courts injury, burnout and failure. Galloway suggests never increasing your distance by more than 10 percent every two weeks.

I ran the full 26.2-mile distance three weeks before the contest most of the time in my marathon training. A few times I ran only 22 or 23. Imprudently pushing yourself too hard three weeks before a marathon can sabotage months of training.

Success in training and running depends on runners’ knowing and accepting their limitations and lowering their expectations consistent with their abilities. The key, then, is to stop and walk when you need to in your training, not to push yourself so hard as to sustain an injury that, after all those weeks of training, will keep you from toeing the starting line or crossing the finish line.

To finish a marathon is a great personal achievement. Once you cross that finish line, whether it is once or 10 times, you are forever a marathoner.

Train wisely, stay healthy and envision that finish line just ahead.

Did I remind you to accept your limitations?

**Footnote:** If you missed the Chevron Houston Marathon registration, registration for the Feb. 13, Surfside Beach Marathon and Half Marathon is still open at [www.surfsidebeachmarathon.com](http://www.surfsidebeachmarathon.com).

**Bill Shaw’s running column appears in *The Facts* every other Monday.**