

RACE DAY READY

All the proper training in the world, won't add up to anything if you're not ready to be your best, mentally, on race day. I work as an exercise physiologist so I work in making sure all the aerobic and anaerobic components of an individual's workout plan are just right. You don't have to sell me on the importance of proper training. I make my living on it. But running and multi-sporting is my hobby so I can step away from the exercise phys lab and look at it from a racers' point of view. And I can tell you this, you can do all the perfect training in the world, but if the mind is not right on race day, you will have a much harder time reaching your goal.

Have you ever just gone for a run and you don't feel like doing it, but you do it anyway? How is your pace? Are you going as fast as usual? Do you feel as comfortable or strong? If you say yes, you're simply not being honest or you're not paying attention. Of course we'll be going slower if the brain is not dialed in to what we're doing. The point is this: You can't expect your training program and your ability to take you through on race day. You must have the "right" frame of mind. I won't to preface what I've prefaced before; this article isn't just for the "racers". Again, I feel all of us who line up to do an event want to do our best that day. Our best is relative, but we all want to be the best representation of our self as possible don't we? We may not always PR, but we can always give our best effort. And giving our best effort goes beyond pushing through lactic acid and mental fatigue. Giving our best starts with having the best attitude possible at the starting line. You can look at any sport, from our sport of running to the NFL and you'll find people that simply "step up" when the race or game is on. They love it. They thrive on it. In baseball, I can think of Derek Jeter. He may have an "average" year, but put him in the World Series and Mr. November is up to the challenge. Why? Again, I think people some people have worked on, practiced, and prioritized making themselves as mentally strong as possible. And I think how they approach their sport is how they approach life—just my opinion.

What are some of these characteristics that we could all use to make us stronger in our next big event whether it be our first 5k or our first triathlon our "pr"ing at BOSTON?

- **CONTROL WHAT YOU CAN:** The only thing you can control is YOU. I think we have to go into each race controlling ourselves only. This means we can't become fixated on the conditions. They don't matter!!! Every competition has to deal with them. Don't worry if the course is hilly; don't worry if it's too hot or too cold, don't worry if the surf is high or if it's raining. You can't do anything about that. Once you're there, it's time to go. If you let it get to you, you will fail at meeting your goal. Champions (and I mean in character) attack the conditions. They find reasons why the conditions are good things. They do need dwell on the negatives. Personally I thrive on bad conditions. I do better in them. I think because I tell myself that "when (not if) I get through this, it will make my next race that much easier." Again, don't worry about conditions no matter what they

are. If you're a basketball fan, you remember when Michael Jordan was not going to play in the 98 finals due to the flu and a high fever? He was in the hospital the night before on an IV. Somehow he managed to play and I can't remember his exact point total but it was in the 30's and they show the final game winner he hit over and over on ESPN. At half time, he was on an IV. I'm not saying any of us can match MJ's level (nor his salary); I'm using him as an example of he does not focus on the conditions; he puts his focus on what he must do despite the conditions. What people don't realize about Jordan is that many NBA players came close to matching his ability but few (if any) have ever matched his heart and work ethic.

- Confidence. Don't focus on what you can't do; focus on what you can do. Stonewall Jackson states "don't give council to your fears". Don't think about them. Do what you have to do. Don't think about all the reasons why you may or may not fail. Would you talk to a friend that way? Think about all the reasons you will prevail. Think about your success in training; think about your goals and how hard you've worked. And if you have to simply fall back on yourself. Deep down you must believe you will make it or why would you sign up? Deep down, I would guess that everybody who starts at the line of a marathon believes they will make it to the end. But along the way, fear enters in. Fall back on the original believe in yourself. We're not stupid right? I would not sign up to swim the English Channel. Why? I'm not sure I would make it. That has nothing to do with self-confidence; it has everything to do with I swim 1500 yards to times a week and sink like a rock. So therefore, I wouldn't make it a goal. So once you've set a goal, and you've trained for it, have the confidence that you'll be just fine. Don't let a negative thought enter into your mind.
- Get out of yourself. Ok, this one might be preachy, but if you want to race better try it. We hear all the time about guys/gals getting into this zone—like your deep down in your own little world. But I think to be successful; you must get out of yourself. When I've had "bad races", I've turned inward. I start to dwell on what's wrong. This only leads to more problems. I learned that lesson. It's selfish and it doesn't work. Now when I "hurt", I reach out to struggling runner so I'll feel better. I know that sounds corny but it works. At Jacksonville this past year, I had horrible quad, calf cramps the final 12 miles. I did not know if I was going to finish. So I decided to take my mind off of myself. So each runner that past me (all 1004 of them) and the few I passed (2 walking), I would Tell them that they "look strong" or "keep it up"—consequently, I made it. I found that positive energy charged me up. Gave me what I need. Along the way, (not maybe in this race, but in my running career), I learned that my running is not only about me. I, being a coach, set an example. I must give my best effort. People are counting on me. A compliment I'll never forget came after my first marathon. (I didn't even come close to what my goal time was but as it turned out, I met the goal of what my trainees wanted for me). It was a super hot day. The temp was in the high 80's for the marathon. Many people quit. One of my trainees (who happened to be way up front) wanted to quit. Over and over they told me later they wanted to quit. When asked later why they didn't they stated that they knew I was back there somewhere and they knew for sure that I

wouldn't quit. I took that as a huge complement. So, we're not just out there for ourselves. We're out there for the people running next to us, we're out there for our training partners, and we're out there for our family at the end. Certainly, there are conditions when DNF is unavoidable, and I wouldn't want anybody to jeopardize their health. Just remember we're all in this together.

1. Control yourself; not the conditions
2. Believe in yourself
3. Get out of yourself