

The Marathon Survival Package

You have trained your brains out and you are now ready to challenge THE MARATHON!!! (Of course you have trained your brains out...otherwise you would be intelligent enough to stay home and watch it on TV.) You have run thousands of miles and read thousands of pages of text on perfect technique and listened to thousands of hours of lectures. Just when you think you know it all, The Marathon Group has the unhappy duty of informing you that there is MORE to coping with the journey than you realized. But, as always, we are here for you and have done our best to take you on your "final training run."

PACKING IT IN

Take everything you own. It is the only way. You can never be certain what the weather will do, so you must be prepared for cold and hot weather marathons. We want you to look good on marathon day, but we do not want human sacrifice, so you must forego fashion for comfort and dress in OLD clothes. From your underwear to your shoe inserts to your singlet, each item of clothing MUST be soft and well worn. Yes, it's true that they will be well worn anyhow after 26.2 miles, but YOU do not want to be. A misplaced Fruit of the Loom tag once managed to eat its way through one of our runners and into the runner in front of him. Beware. In addition to soft, worn clothing, you might consider wearing your name or some other easily identifiable markings on the front of your singlet so that the crowd will have something to yell at you besides, "LOOKING GOOD, LADY!!! ONLY 19 MORE MILES TO GO!!!"

Pack **all** your running gear in a carry-on bag and do not let any airline sweet-talk you out of it. Several of our runners have been known to handcuff themselves to their running bags, but the metal detectors go off and it creates such a scene. Please just guard your gear with your life. If you go to New York and your shoes go to British Columbia, your marathon is over. We had one runner who ignored this advice, let the airline send his shoes on a world tour, bought a substitute pair, entered the marathon and tried to compete. He should be out of the hospital sometime next year and the doctors swear that no one will be able to tell which is his real foot and which is latex! In your running gear, you should also pack your marathon paperwork. Make certain that you have it with you. The marathon staff cannot permit you to enter unless they can verify your identity, and they cannot verify your identity if your fingerprints are worn off from choking a baggage handler at La Guardia. Beware.

WHAT SHOULD I BRING?

Again, bring everything! Make a list of the activities you and your friends have planned and pack accordingly. Remember that you will want to have rested feet and legs so please leave your drop dead high heels at home (this is especially true for you guys...) The weather will probably be cooler than our Florida temps, so you need to pack a sweater or sweatshirt and a jacket. Also, please try not to look like too much of a tourist, so leave your jewelry, Bermuda shorts, Hawaiian shirts, black socks and Hush Puppies at home. It makes a great outfit for slumming around here, but if you wear it in DC, Chicago, or New York, you might as well write "VICTIM" across your forehead with a felt tip pen and stand out on the street with hundred dollar bills hanging out of your pockets.

The Vital Stuff (hand carry this bag)

- Running bag
- Shorts
- Tee Shirt or Singlet
- Running socks
- Running shoes
- Sweats
- Towel
- Gatorade
- Squeeze bottle
- Safety pins
- Disposable camera
- Money
- Jog Bra
- Shoe pocket
- Extra shoe laces
- Ground cover
- Blanket
- Hat
- Gloves
- Vaseline, or Body Glide
- Aspirin or Advil
- Extra socks
- Running tights
- Plastic bag
- Extra running shoes
- First aid and blister supplies

The Really Important Stuff (hand carry this bag)

- Marathon paperwork
- Plane ticket
- Theater tickets, tickets to other reserved events
- Hotel name, address and phone number
- Credit cards
- Cash, including \$1 bills for tips
- Maps
- Notes, guides
- Wallet with a minimum of cards and its contents photocopied

The Other Stuff

- Coat
- Sweater
- Hat
- Gloves
- Underwear
- Slacks, skirts, dresses
- Blouses, shirts
- Socks, nylons
- Camera, film
- Stamps
- Mailing labels for postcards
- Shoes
- Plastic bags for ice packs and laundry
- Cosmetics and shaving gear
- Shampoo and hair care products
- Tooth brush and tooth paste
- Glasses, sunglasses contact lens equipment
- Gatorade, Power Bars, Cliff Shots, etc.
- Food, gum, drinks
- Reading material and guide books
- Woolite for in-room laundry
- Extra running outfits for workouts
- Aspirin, Advil
- Religious medals, talismans, good luck charms, etc.

EXPO TIPS

Do it early. Get your number and paperwork and then secure it. Make certain that you get safety pins. Have a trusted loved one hold your wallet and checkbook. Have a good time, but please remember that one person can wear only so many marathon tee shirts in one lifetime. Yes, you can take a guest. Yes you can buy extra carbo-loading party tickets.

HOW TO HAIL A CAB

We don't mean to treat you like you're stupid, but let's face it...Winter Park doesn't have cabs like this and there are a few things you should know. First, you hail one by raising your arm in the air with two fingers extended (which two are your choice...), and shouting, "TAXI!" and making eye contact with the driver. He will stop if he is available with the light on the top of his cab ON. Light off means that his cab is occupied or unavailable. Another thing you should know is that the cabbie needs to have the street address of the place you want to go. We know it is astonishing, but they often act ignorant when you say things like, "Take me to the Wellington." Write down the addresses of the places you plan to visit. Cabbies, also called "Hacks," are most frequently from foreign countries. (For the first two years we visited New York City, we thought it was a prerequisite of the job that your last name could contain no vowels.) They are generally fluent in English, honest and good-natured, but try to not look like a dweeb who can be driven from La Guardia to the Wellington via Idaho. Yo!

HOW TO USE THE SUBWAY

Carefully...very carefully.

PLAYING AROUND TOWN

There is something for everyone! Liza Minelli sings of New York as "the city that never sleeps." The same goes for DC...except on Capitol Hill (I've been trying to get them to wake up for years.) AAA has a full selection of tour books and magazines so that you can plan a few things in advance. If you have not taken time to do so, fear not. If you just show up and attach yourself to your running buddies, plenty of activities will unfold without any effort on your part. Our observation is that the city is entertainment itself. We do advise caution, however. We lost half the group one-year when they decided to spend Saturday before the marathon on a grand tour of the Empire State Building and the Statue of Liberty and decided to use stairs only. It was impressively macho, but it cost them the race. Get all your crazy touring, ice-skating, mambo dancing, and LSD out of the way on **Friday**. Sleep in on Saturday. And confine your activities to ones which are not too hard on your legs. Pigeon feeding is nice. Watching leaves turn to gold in Central Park is nice. Relacing your shoes is nice. OK, so it's also boring...**please just use restraint** and save yourself for the marathon.

THE NIGHT BEFORE THE MARATHON

As Chuck Cornett says, “pre-flight your gear.” Lay out your marathon clothes and inspect each piece for problems. Remove the linings from your shoes and make certain that each shoe is free from debris that could cause blistering. Inspect your laces to make certain they will not break through during the run. Trim your toe nails to avoid black toe. Mix up your Gatorade and put it in squeeze bottles. Set your alarm clock. Call the desk for a back-up wake-up call. Form a buddy system with another couple of runners for wake-up calls. Pack your running bag (list later). Check and recheck every item on your list. Relax and then go to bed as early as possible.

Notice we said, “**Go to bed**” and not “**Go to sleep**”?” We know better. Just go ahead and toss and turn all night. Get up and walk the floor for a few minutes. Stare at the wall and wonder how a nice person like you got into a situation like this. Throw up a couple of times. Pray. Put your running clothes on and sit in the bottom of your closet with the bed spread over your head. Call the hotel operator several times to make certain that your watch is still working accurately. Read and re-read the starting line instructions. Wonder why you can no longer comprehend English. Whine nonstop for a few hours...and then pull yourself together and meet your group.

MARATHON MORNING

Set your alarm, use the wake-up service of the hotel, and get your buddies to phone you to make certain that you are up and at 'em on time. Start your hydration ritual and hit the john. Try to arrange it so that you start the marathon as “empty” as possible (if you catch our drift.) But do not skip breakfast. The marathon is hours away and you are going to be out all day. Don't be crazy enough to think you can turn in your best effort with blood sugar levels so low that you plunge into ketosis before you even get to the elevator. If you are a breakfast eater, eat breakfast. In NYC, there are donuts and bagels and coffee at the Fort, but do not plan to eat or drink **anything** that you have not eaten or drunk before!!! Allow yourself plenty of time to dress carefully, organize your gear, check for your number, make certain that your bag is clearly marked and tagged, and that you are spiritually, emotionally, and physically ready to go out and make it your best day. Do **everything** you can to ensure this.

WHAT'S IN THAT RUNNING BAG!?!

Two sets of stuff. Stuff for before the race and stuff for after the race:

Before the race:

Gatorade
Ground Cover
Plastic bag for warmth
Clothes to be discarded
Reading material
Disposable camera
Vaseline and first aid supplies
Advil
Food
Safety Pins

After the race:

Gatorade
Dry clothes and warm-ups
Soft, old, dry shoes
Cab fare, phone money
Card from hotel
Plastic bag and towel
Vaseline and first aid supplies
Advil
Food

THE MARATHON

There is nothing we can write that will help you now. There is nothing anyone can write that will help you now. There is nothing anyone can do that will help you now. We suggest that you call a priest. But there are just a few words we can offer for advice: Go out and have a ball. You have earned the right to have your one moment in time when you'll be all you can be, when all of your dreams are a heart beat away and the answers are all up to ...but wait...we lapse into Whitney Houston here. You know what we mean, anyhow. This is it; make no mistake. Drink often, enjoy the crowds, run your own pace, do everything you know how to do from your training, smile, relax, and we'll see you on the finish line.

THE COURSE

Yes, there are potties. Yes, there is water. Yes, there is some type of sports drink. Yes, there are first aid stations staffed by nice men and women who will re-attach any part of your anatomy which falls off and then send you back on your way. No, there is no food on the course except in the hands of strangers. Yes, you are going to be wonderful.

THE WALL

Any discussion of the marathon, even one as tiny as this, should address the question of THE WALL. What is it? Where is it? Why is it? And how do we make it go away? Technically, THE WALL is the moment at which your body switches its fuel source from glycogen and looks for alternate fuel sources to metabolize like large muscle masses, internal organs, your shorts, and other runners who venture too near you. If you are going to hit it, you will find it around 18-22 miles. You may not encounter it at all, but it is nice to know about it in advance so that you can deal with it intelligently

THE WALL - (continued)

and not have anyone step on your tongue. It is called THE WALL and we speak of "hitting it" because it feels like slamming into a brick wall. One moment you will be running along, feeling like Bill Rodgers on a good day and the next minute you will be flattened out. THE WALL is characterized by fatigue, cramping, inability to think rationally, and severe crankiness. For some of us, this is a natural and constant state of being. We have a major advantage over those of you who are athletic, relaxed, rested, rational, and obnoxiously pleasant all the time. Take heart if you hit it! You will live and the cure is just around the corner at the finish line. Try walking a little and drinking. Try strangling the spectators who are shouting encouragements at you like "ONLY 6 MORE MILES TO GO!!!"

PIT CREWS

Crew people are there to care for an athlete. If you are crewing, please realize that you are assisting a person who is attempting to do a thing, which is physically impossible; and that task takes tremendous physical and mental tolls. The happy, excited runner with whom you stepped off the plane will spiral into complete madness by Saturday night and be nearly unrecognizable by Sunday morning. Compulsive rituals, self-destructive behaviors, neo-religious ceremonies will replace familiar patterns. Small talk is impossible. We are obsessed by food and Vaseline and pace charts. Non-runners often feel shut out and confused by this if you do not understand what is happening. For two days, Saturday and Sunday, you **must** grin and bear it. We have seen husbands file for divorce; we have seen Daddy's little angel turn into the anti-Christ; we have seen years of friendship disintegrate in Central Park. We have seen it all and it can all be avoided by observing a small rule of thumb: for these two days, your needs are secondary to those of your runner. In the hours before the marathon, need and whim are one in the same. Please agree to eat anywhere and eat anything your runner wants from Saturday morning until Monday at noon. Please agree to go to sleep and turn out the lights on Saturday night when your runner says so. Please allow your runner to turn on the lights when he or she gets up on Sunday. You can go back to sleep and the runner needs to be able to find everything. If your runner asks for you to be at mile 16, please do everything humanly possible to be there. If you arrange to meet at the finish line, please be there without fail. Please agree to carry anything and do anything that will make your runner more comfortable and secure. An effective crew can make such an important contribution to the success of your runner. There are many factors in a marathon that cannot be controlled by an athlete. It is very important that he or she be able to control as much as possible and you, as crew, become a vital member of the team by providing some of that control. So important is your contribution that your failure to do your job could easily cost your runner the marathon. The responsibility is an awesome one and one we take very seriously. Crew people, plan to wear clothing that is highly visible at great distances or through glazed eyes. Plan to take a banner...or wear matching jackets or day-glow tee shirts and baseball caps. You will also need a bag or a backpack and a camera.

LOOKING GOOD AT THE FINISH!

Smile! You'll be on camera! We had one runner one year who packed an entire Estee' Lauder cosmetics counter in her shoe pocket, stopped at mile 25.5, fixed herself all up, and then cruised in looking **gorgeous**!! We do not think this is necessary, but you should look up and bask in the glory of the moment for the cameras. Please do not cover your number when you cross the finish line or you will obstruct the bar code they are trying to scan. Also try not to throw up until you are past the cameras.

When you cross the line, you will be wrapped in a mylar blanket so that you will not lose body heat while walking in line through the chute. Keep it tightly wrapped around you and keep moving. Someone will tear the tag off your number and a big friendly person will move to your side, probably slide his arm around your waist, walk with you a while, congratulate you on a job well done, and ask you how you thought you did. Your initial instinct will be to shred him up, but you will not have the energy to get your hands up to his face. Relax! He is just doing his job. He is looking into your eyes to see if you are truly in there. He is smelling you to see if you smell fruity from ketosis. He is checking to see how shaky you are and if you are limping. He is asking you questions to see if you have appropriate answers. He is from the Triage Team and, if you fail to satisfy him that you are well, you will be hauled into a medical tent until you are restored to a satisfactory level of competence. This is good and you should ask for his help if you need it, but if you want to avoid this situation, you should know in advance that there is only one appropriate response to any question he asks: "FOOD!" If you come in fixated on food, he will know that you are normal and let you go. Remember...FOOD! If you ask for food, you will get food. A whole bag of it...and a bottle of water. Of course you will not be able to hold any of this in your hands, but you can always lie face down on the pavement on top of the bag and suck the food directly out of it. The Triage Team frowns on this practice, so be careful in front of whom you do this. Oh, by the way, you will also get a medal and ladies get a single long stemmed red rose. They are very nice to you!

Except for making you walk another 164 miles to the bus where you can retrieve your bag and then walk another 237 miles to the family reunion area where you can meet your family, friends, and crew and then walk another 897 miles to the hotel. Crew people should assist at this point by carrying the running bag, pulling the warm-up suit pants up from around your runner's ankles, not cursing when your runner throws up on you, and not laughing when your runner encounters a curb and can't deal with it. (Simply suggest that your runner step down backwards...same for steps...)

THE NIGHT AFTER THE MARATHON: DANCIN' OR DYIN'?

After the marathon, go to your hotel room, take Advil or aspirin and get into a tub of cold water. Take your bag of food with you. Soak, eat and then stretch. Rest or sleep for a while and then plan to go out to eat...and eat...and eat...and eat. Try to find restaurants with no steps, soft chairs and **huge** menus. Order everything. And eat it. Crew, do not get your hands in the way or you will lose a finger or two. Just push your chair gently back when your runner lunges for your plate...and do not make any sudden moves which could startle him. Waiters and waitresses in restaurants around the marathon finish line are used to this aggressive behavior and come from the kitchen with armed guards, so crews do not need to be concerned with the safety and well being of these staffs. They are professional. Yo.

In evening, the NYC marathon sponsors a dance. It is well worth your while to go, because you will have the distinct pleasure of seeing energetic, athletic, triumphant marathon runners trip the light fantastic...from the waist up **only**. Also, the marathon staff has a mighty sense of humor and books this dance in a facility where the bathrooms are down a flight of stairs. Take your camera and get many pictures of large groups of marathon runners standing at the top of these stairs, staring down them, whining loudly and longingly.

When you are through bathing, dining, and dancing, go to bed and sleep as long as you can. Dream about ever being able to walk again. Plan next year.

GETTING HOME

A quick word of advice about flying home, when the flight attendant asks for pre-boarding people, people flying with small children, people who need extra assistance or time to board, struggle to your feet and drag yourself and your bag onto the plane. Please try to get a seat at the bulkhead or the aisle so that you can stretch out. Plan to take a walk or two in flight. Keep drinking, keep eating, and keep reliving the marathon. In time you will come to appreciate what a magnificent experience it was!