

# FINAL COUNTDOWN FOR BOSTON

By **DON SIKORSKI**  
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With just eight days remaining until the 110<sup>th</sup> Boston Marathon, runners who have trained for months through the challenging New England winter finally get a chance to shift gears and get themselves rested and ready for Patriot's Day. Marathon runners either cherish or loathe these final days. The recommended decrease in training volume often leads runners to second guess their training or concern themselves with lost fitness. Other negative thoughts also enter the mind, ranging from weather forecasts to aches and pains. Let's take a look at our runners as they enter the final countdown to race day.

George Adrian realized some unfortunate luck when a severe pain in his right ankle began acting up with only a few weeks remaining to marathon day. Setbacks like this are a runner's worst nightmare, because a single injury can wipe out months of training and hard work, especially training geared towards one specific goal race like a marathon. A visit to the Physical Therapist confirmed the pain but offered no answer, so Adrian's next step was to see an Orthopedic Doctor for an x-ray. Good news; a stress fracture was ruled out as an MRI showed no sign of fracture or ruptured tendon. Adrian has slowly resumed his running cautiously, but still carries some concerns about lost fitness and how the injury will hold up during the later stages of the marathon. "My confidence is shaken," said Adrian of the injury. "But what happens, happens. With running, the means is more than the end for me. I've really enjoyed the camaraderie (running with Bob Walsh and Peter Weeden) and the fact that I'm staying in shape. I've been trying my best to keep the pressure off, but it's not easy," said Adrian as he approaches the final week before the big day.

Bob Walsh of East Lyme has followed a precise schedule of long runs, gradually building up to over 24 miles by the end of March. Now the most enjoyable part of the training program begins, as the length of the long runs gradually decreases and the marathoner's goal becomes focused more on rest than weekly mileage totals. Walsh ran 16 miles last weekend, and will continue to cut down his training leading up to Patriot's Day. While some marathon runners struggle with the mental discipline of reducing training volume, Walsh has no problem with tapering. "I love this time," explains Walsh of the two weeks before a marathon. "It's my favorite time. We're starting to break the training down, and the final week, we'll run 5-4-3-2 miles and then on the last couple of days, nothing," says Walsh of the final week's plan.

Peter Weeden is also ready to go and is optimistic based not only on how well the group long runs have gone, but also how quickly his body has seemed to recover from these workouts. "Bob has been great about putting Gatorade out on the course for our long runs," said Weeden. "We've also been using GU (energy gel) and trying jelly beans that George had recommended. We have finished our long runs feeling strong and weren't glucose depleted. Bob and I ran almost 25 miles (March 25<sup>th</sup>) in about 3 ½ hours and our legs have never been so strong. I feel great." The group (Adrian, Walsh, and Weeden) plan to taper their training over the final week and a half, with their longest runs maxing out at 8-10 miles.

Norwich's Sue Sucholet has added mileage over the last few weeks, running between 50-55 miles, and has attempted to run around noontime to simulate Boston's unique start time. She has also been taking care of the minor last minute details, like finding a running outfit and sneakers for race day. Sucholet admits that Boston's logistics, as compared to smaller marathons, will be her biggest challenge. "I'm used to running marathons that are smaller and you can get there an hour before they start," said Sucholet. "The thing about Boston that kind of scares me is the start time (12:00 Noon) and that I won't have my support team out on the course." In her past marathons, Sucholet has had friends and family out on the race course encouraging her. "My family and friends have helped me with my training, whether it is running with me or bringing me water or just seeing if I am OK." That luxury won't be available in Boston. "Am I ready for Boston? I don't think you are ever totally ready for a marathon. I'm going to experience it and hopefully the body will be on my side that day."

It appears that these runners are right on track in their Boston Marathon preparation. With only one week remaining until race day, the majority of the hard work has already been done, and now the goal is to get to the starting line in Hopkinton rested and ready.

## **Culpepper joins Boston Marathon field**

The American contingent at Boston should be amongst the best in recent years, with Meb Keflezighi and Alan Culpepper leading the way. Keflezighi is the Olympic silver medalist and placed second in last fall's ING New York City Marathon, while Culpepper, a two-time Olympian from Colorado, ran 2:09:41 at the 2002 Chicago Marathon, tying Alberto Salazar for the fastest American debut marathon ever. His 4<sup>th</sup> place finish in last year's Boston Marathon was the highest finish by an American since Dave Gordon finished 4<sup>th</sup> overall back in 1987. Expect both to content on Patriot's Day in a race that no American male has won since Greg Meyer ran 2:09:00 in 1983.

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