

MARATHONING 101: THE BASE

By DON SIKORSKI
Special to the Bulletin

Kevin Gallerani celebrated his 52nd birthday last weekend with a group of his running friends. Downing more than his fair share of post-run food and drink, Gallerani was feeling pretty good about his morning effort, a 13 mile run over a hilly course from his Uncasville home in which he was able to hold a 7:30 per mile pace without struggling. The next day, however, was a different story. "I was a little crippled on Sunday," confessed Gallerani. But an easy run on the forgiving grass surface of the Norwich Golf Course the next day shook off most of the painful effect of both Saturday's run and the post-run libations.

In this week's installment of "Marathon Training 101", we'll emphasize the importance of establish a solid mileage base for effective marathon results. Our test subject, Kevin Gallerani, is aiming to run in the 3 hour and 20 minute range in this year's B.A.A. Boston Marathon. And while Gallerani has run faster marathon in past years, he realizes that his body won't allow him to pound out the same mileage and workouts that he has in past years.

In addition to increasing the distance of his long run, Kevin has also introduced some threshold-paced running into his weekly schedule. On Tuesday, he incorporated hill training into his run, pushing the effort on each of the eight uphill stretches of an 8 mile run. Thursday, he came back with a different variation of a tempo run, covering 3 continuous miles near 7:15 per mile in the middle of a 6 mile run. "I wanted to test the legs a bit," says Gallerani in justifying his strategy. "It's nice to know how my hamstrings will react to this pace". Gallerani's weekly mileage total was 43½ (many runners, especially those of an analytical mindset, track their mileage right down to the ½ mile) and he's still standing, which is a positive sign. Still, he continues to evaluate his ability to recover from each training effort. "After my long runs, my joints and lower back are shot," claims Gallerani.

COACH'S CORNER FEEDBACK: Don Sikorski and Chris Hansen have written "Coach's Corner", a running column that provides training recommendations to runners of all levels of ability. They will evaluate Kevin's training plan and progress and offer feedback of his marathon training progress over the 16 week period. This week, Norwich's Tim Smith, the East Lyme Marathon course record holder (2:23:56 in 1982), also offers his insight on running a competitive marathon effort.

DON: "Kevin is certainly motivated and willing to do the work, but he needs to be careful not to increase both his mileage and his intensity too dramatically in order to avoid injury. Every competitive distance runner walks that fine line between peak fitness and injury, and the more training we do, the more stress we put on the body. But I think Kevin has done his homework, scheduling a day off each week and paying attention to his aches and pains. Right now, there isn't enough separation between his tempo workout pace (7:15) and his long-run pace (7:30). As he progresses, his tempo runs should begin to get faster and his long runs will increase in distance and slow down a bit.

CHRIS: "It's good that Kevin's not trying to run 20 miles right away. I applaud him for sticking with the hills and the tempo running. I think that gives you the most bang for your buck. I think 7:15 pace is probably easy for him; his tempo run pace is probably faster than that. But it's good that he's not going crazy with the mileage. You can write the perfect schedule, but you can get tired early (in the program) if you try to do too much."

SPECIAL GUEST COMMENTARY – TIM SMITH: "The most important element (of marathon training) is logging the miles," says Smith on the basics of marathon success. "Get the miles in the bank. And then when it does come time to back off, the strengths are renewed and the body responds even better". Smith also reflects back on his days of youth and both the benefits and drawbacks of competitive distance running. "When I was younger, they said that running is wonderful," recalls Smith. "But the problem is, you can't quit. In those days, it was not uncommon for me to run 100 miles in a week. I would even hit 110 or 120, and it felt as easy as walking down the street. But now my body is paying for it." Still Smith is quick to point out the benefits of running, and the positive life experiences that difficult training carry with it. "You need to experience that mental discipline," Smith believes. "It's a matter of putting one step in front of the other. And I never felt so confident as I did when I hit that breakdown zone; that anaerobic, out-of-sorts feeling of overextending myself. What I was doing lent itself to that environment". Smith believes that the formula for marathon success all begins with the basics. "There's no substitute for getting the mileage in."

In the next column, we'll take a look at Kevin's plan to transition into more specific pace work and threshold training aimed at improving his ability to run comfortably at his marathon goal pace.

MARATHON SUMMARY POINTS:

- Establish a solid mileage base
- Build mileage and intensity gradually
- Introduce different training paces and efforts
- Pay attention to your body

Don Sikorski writes a twice-monthly running column for the Norwich Bulletin. His "Coach's Corner" column can be

accessed at www.moheganstriders.org. He can also be reached by e-mail at kdcsikorski@sbcglobal.net.