MARATHONING 101: THE ADJUSTMENTS

By DON SIKORSKI

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As the temperature drops, reality begins to set in. Bundling up and heading out the door for an evening run during a New England winter takes some courage, but with temperatures lowering into the mid-teens and wind chill factors bringing the chill down to near the zero mark, Kevin Gallerani's aging body is refusing to cooperate the way it was just weeks earlier. "Last week just kicked my butt," said Gallerani, 52, in reference to his Boston Marathon buildup. "I'm just not used to the cold and the wind chill factor. I'm O.K. when its 25-30 degrees, but this is rough." In order to counter the jabs that Mother Nature has thrown at him, Gallerani adjusted his training schedule to incorporate some daytime miles in. Last week, Monday through Thursday, Gallerani stepped out of work for a 5 mile run at noon, and then added 3 more miles at home during the evening hours. "I ran no speed or hills," said Gallerani of his adjusted plan. "My body is just not going to perform in real cold weather."

Still, Gallerani retains some optimism approaching the 111th B.A.A. Boston Marathon on April 16th. In this week's installment of "Marathon Training 101", we'll review the hidden benefits associated with incorporating an easy week of training into an ambitious schedule. Our subject, Kevin Gallerani of Uncasville, is training to run this year's Boston Marathon in 3 hours and 20 minutes. Challenging temperatures have caused Gallerani to adjust his strategy, and last week's workouts did not measure up to his original plan. However, Gallerani still remains charted on course to where he hopes to end up. "I did get all of my miles (50) in last week," said Gallerani, who logged a strong 15 miler on Saturday and hopes to tackle 18 this weekend. And with the snow and sleet that blanketed the area this past week, Gallerani combined his two weekday workouts into one, incorporating both hills and tempo-paced running into his Wednesday evening run. Besides the weather, the only additional struggle has been with his Achilles heel, which had bothered him on and off in recent years. And despite advice from this column, Gallerani continues to cruise along at a brisk clip during his weekend long runs. "I still seem to be more comfortable at a 7:40 pace," countered Gallerani in explaining his reasoning for running faster than the recommended pace for long runs. I would conclude that either Kevin's effort is too great on these runs, or else he is sandbagging his goal time for Boston. Either way, Gallerani is looking forward to April and hoping for increasing temperatures. He has also arrived at another conclusion after 35+ years of running. "This will definitely be the last time I train for a cold weather marathon," promised 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.

DON: "Many national class runners plan their training in "blocks", which consist of three weeks of high mileage and difficult workouts followed by a fourth week with a significant reduction in training volume and/or intensity. This allows the athlete to stay fresh throughout a long racing season and remain mentally focused. Kevin has pretty much accomplished this by default, thanks to the challenging weather conditions. I still believe that rather than lose fitness, he will actually recognize benefits from this adjustment to his schedule."

CHRIS: "Kevin might want to consider a schedule with one "down" week every four weeks," recommends Hansen. "You can't expect to constantly build your training every week. In this type of weather, you have to use some common sense. Stress (on the body) is still stress". Hansen also advises caution when dealing with nagging pain that could potentially lead to injury. "If his Achilles is still bothering him, it's not prudent to go out and run 18 miles," advises Hansen. "After all, Kevin doesn't have a problem running 26 miles." Overall, Hansen holds firm on his suggestion to transition from a 7 day training cycle to a 10 day workout schedule. "Kevin got hung up on trying to run 3 workouts in 7 days, when it would have been better for him to run 3 workouts in 10 days."

In the next column, we'll track Kevin's progress heading into March and the final stages of his 16 week training plan for the Boston Marathon.

MARATHON SUMMARY POINTS:

- Maintain long-term focus
- Incorporate training blocks that allow for an easy week to recover
- Be flexible and allow for alternative training plans

Millrose Games

The showdown at the prestigious Wanamaker Mile between Americans Bernard Lagat and Alan Webb never materialized, with Webb failing to replicate the magic of a week earlier at the 100h running of the Millrose Games in New York's Madison Square Garden. The Four-time Wanamaker champion Lagat fended off the challenge of Australia's Craig Mottram over the final lap of the 160 yard oval track, leaving Webb, who had run 3:55 at the Reebok Indoor Games just 6 days earlier, and the remainder of the field in their wake. Webb's opening quarter mile of 56 seconds on the relatively slow Millrose track may have been his undoing, as he faded after the 800 meter mark and never contended, finishing a distant 4th in a very disappointing 4:01.48. Lagat zipped past Mottram on the final lap to win his 5th Wannamaker title in a brisk 3:54.26, with Mottram right behind in 3:54.81. Lagat's victory brings him closer to the all-time Wannamaker record of 7 wins, set by Irish legend Eammon Coghlan.

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.