

MARATHONING 101: THE TRANSITION

By DON SIKORSKI
Special to the Bulletin

“So far, so good,” was Kevin Gallerani’s self-evaluation as he approaches the month of March with a few lingering aches and pains but relatively clear of any injury that would slow him down in his quest to race the 111th B.A.A. Boston Marathon on April 16th. A meticulous training planner, Gallerani was a bit distraught about not meeting his exact mileage goal of a week earlier; short a mere 3 miles of the planned tally. He blames Mother Nature and a late-night social obligation last weekend for his variance. “Last Thursday was a long day at work,” recalls Gallerani. “And then when I got home, I didn’t feel like doing a run in a 35 degree cold rain. I bagged it”. Still, Gallerani was able to produce quality efforts on the weekends, cruising comfortably through a solid 13 mile run a week ago. The weekend before, he had planned to run 18 miles and ratchet the pace down a bit quicker to simulate a mid-race effort. Instead, he only ran about 15½ miles but was pleased with the effort and made a conscious decision not to tack on the additional miles at the end of the run. “I pushed the middle part of the run pretty hard,” said Gallerani of his workout. “I had planned to do 18, but I’ll take the effort. It was just a cold day.”

In this week’s installment of “Marathon Training 101”, we’ll take a closer look at the transition period between the strength of logging solid mileage totals and the speed that comes from faster efforts, increased efficiencies, and improved running economy. Our test subject, Uncasville’s Kevin Gallerani, has been training since the end of December to compete in this year’s Boston Marathon, with a time goal near the 3 hour and 20 minute mark. His Achilles heel pain has subsided, but a recent tweak of the hamstring, an area that has bothered Gallerani in recent years, had given him some concern.

“All in all, I’m still on schedule,” claims Gallerani, who plans of running his two 20 mile effort on Saturdays, March 3rd and March 17th. “I’m kind of surprised that I’m still holding up,” said Gallerani. “I don’t know what this hamstring is going to do, but I’m hoping for the best”. Kevin does mention one issue he has yet to address. “I gotta get some sleep,” he admits. “I’m tired”.

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, Lisbon’s Dennis Tetreault, 56, who consistently posted sub 2:50 marathon times with a personal best of 2:46:00 at Boston Marathon in late 1980’s, also offers his insight on running a competitive marathon effort.

CHRIS: Hansen downplayed the importance of Kevin logging 20 miles runs, instead opting to evaluate the recovery time associated with such efforts compared to shorter, more intense runs. “Does he (Kevin) really even need to go 20 (miles),” questioned Hansen? “The recovery from a 20 mile run is a detriment. He could go a little shorter and quicker and work on his threshold, like run 15 miles, for example, at a solid pace. By running 20 miles, what are you really gaining? Kevin doesn’t have an endurance issue”. In Gallerani’s case, Hansen stresses the importance of quality over quantity. “Keep the engine tweaked,” he says, “instead of slogging out a mileage number.”

SPECIAL GUEST COMMENTARY – DENNIS TETREULT: “Mentally, it all boils down to race day,” explains Tetreault. “If you’ve done your training and you’ve done the work, you know it’s difficult. Mentally, I was never a big proponent of running long, slow distance. If you train yourself to run hard, it makes you mentally tougher.” Tetreault’s training was comprised of steady-state runs, where he would get down to marathon race pace and hold that pace for distances up to 14 miles. During the marathon, Tetreault had adequately conditioning his body for the rigors of the maintaining race pace while fatigued.

DON: “Although Chris and Dennis prescribe training that goes against the traditional marathon training approach, their advice is tailored to the specific athlete, not to the masses. Kevin is a marathoning veteran who will have no trouble completing the distance, so Chris’ concern that Kevin is focused on the mileage of his long runs instead of his recovery time is valid. I believe that being in shape to run well at the 10K distance, for example, and being strong enough to hold pace at just above your anaerobic threshold, translates into marathon success. An example would be how Hansen, in his prime running years, could easily run a marathon in the mid 2:40’s range without a training run longer than 12 or 13 miles, simply because he was in shape to run 25:30 for 5 miles. Running 6:20-6:30 pace was relatively easy for him. Tetreault could run 16 low for 5K and trained himself to handle running 6:30 pace during the later stages of a marathon when fatigue kicked in. They were both mentally tough runners. And both are applying that same training logic to Kevin’s 2007 Boston effort.”

In the next column, we’ll follow Kevin’s training transition to decreased volume and increased intensity approaching the final weeks of his 16 week training plan for the Boston Marathon.

MARATHON SUMMARY POINTS:

- Focus on quality training efforts
- Incorporate race-paced training runs
- Get enough rest

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