

[COACH CULPEPPER]

SETTING YOURSELF UP FOR SUCCESS IN 2015

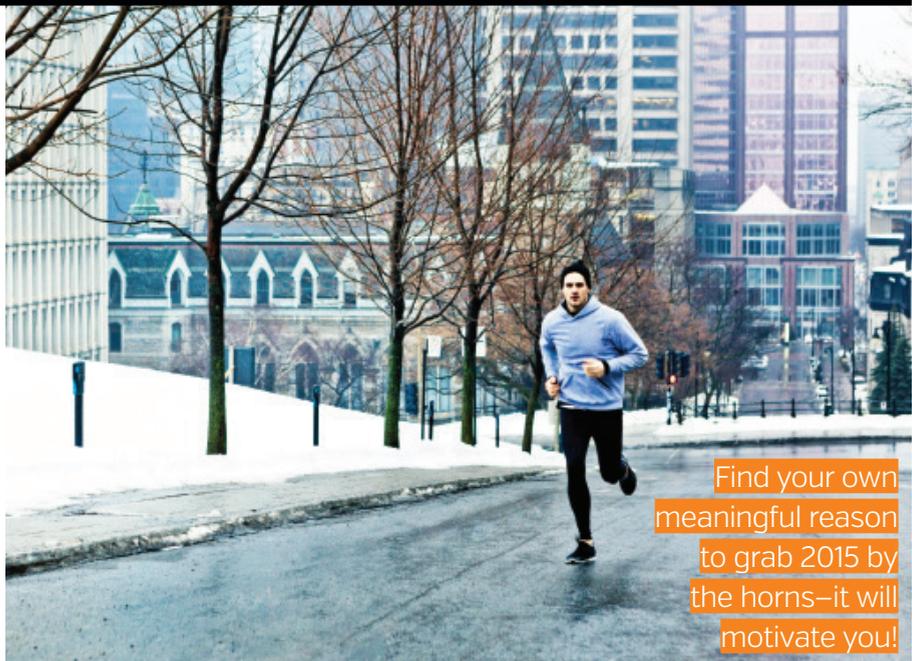
Putting a plan in place is key to going after your goals.

BY ALAN CULPEPPER

SOME OF MY BEST SEASONS

came after years of mixed results or poor endings. In 2000, I had the wonderful experience of qualifying for the Sydney Olympics in the 10,000 meters. Unfortunately I became ill at the Games and had a very sub-standard performance. But ending on that flat note at the Olympics fueled my motivation for the 2001 season. I used the disappointment of placing poorly as motivation to improve my personal best in the 10,000, and, six months later, I set a lifetime PR at the distance. So often, a moment of disappointment can lead to greater incentive down the road.

Regardless of how the last 12 months came together for you, use the ups and downs as your motivation for the coming year. If you had a successful 2014 racing campaign, you'll want to capitalize on that momentum for new challenges. If your year did not come together as you had hoped, it's time to regroup and refocus your efforts for 2015. Or, if you had mixed experiences in your last 12 months of training and racing, use the positive results to build excitement toward your next goal, and the not-so-good instances as learning tools to fuel your fire.



Find your own meaningful reason to grab 2015 by the horns—it will motivate you!

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO ACHIEVE?

Having a clear understanding of what you want to achieve is critical to your 2015 success. This is highly individual, and can change year to year. You might want to improve your time or break through a time barrier, such as a 2-hour half marathon. Or you may want to improve on a particular placing at an event; maybe this is the year to take down your age-group nemesis at the local 5K or 10K. Or perhaps it's time to try something totally different, like your first marathon or an ultra distance event. Establish your goal and from there you can plan the year around that objective. Planning as you go works for smaller, incremental goals, but for a larger primary goal, you need a clear understanding of what you want to work toward from the beginning. When your goal is clear, you have a higher level of accountability to fall back on when motivation wanes.

HOW ARE YOU GOING TO GET THERE?

Once you are clear on what you want to accomplish, lay out a plan to get there; you will significantly increase your chances of success by having a strategic plan. Work backward from your primary goal and fill in the blanks. Add in other enjoyable events that complement the larger goal, then backfill all the required training. Consider family and work obligations, and factor those into your schedule. Seeing a laid-out program will boost your confidence and ability to achieve it. Invest in a coach or training group for added support, and learn the nuances of your target distance or event. Plans always have potential to change with life's surprises—but establishing a baseline, especially at the start of a new year, is the perfect place to begin.



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