

Race Week Execution

Why having a plan and knowing what to expect will improve your performance

BY ALAN CULPEPPER

Many runners will be taking part in this country's largest road racing events this fall while others take a more simple approach and will run a smaller event based on a friend's suggestion, a unique destination or where it lies on the calendar. Whatever event you end up running this fall, you can benefit immensely by knowing what to expect race weekend and planning accordingly ahead of time.

DON'T ASSUME

A common mistake many athletes make is they assume too much about an event. This can be related to the course, the weather, water stations, accommodations and even food. Marquee fall events are often not evaluated by participants as diligently and any event large or

small are filled with complexities. Each one has their nuances and facets worth examining beforehand. Unless you are an invited elite athlete who doesn't have to think about what hotel they are staying in, meal planning, how the shuttle program works, going to the expo to pick up their number etc., then it behooves you to look at all the details.

The New York City Marathon has a major shuttle program, a large wave start and a complicated course worth researching. Rock 'n' Roll Las Vegas starts in the early evening, has a unique start/finish experience being on the Las Vegas Strip and temperatures are cooler than most would expect for the desert. The California International Marathon (CIM) is a point-to-point course with an extreme downhill profile.

The goal of this process is to give you a new level of confidence and a way of looking at the positive benefits verses simply thinking of them as challenges. This exercise can be done for any event and is surprisingly beneficial.

FOR EXAMPLE:

- ▶ You get to sleep in a bit later and have more time for a light meal during the shuttle ride to the start at the New York City Marathon.
- ▶ The cool, dry conditions in Vegas make for a great opportunity to get a personal best.
- ▶ You've trained all fall for long stretches of downhill running, so seeing the dramatic descents on the CIM course during the shuttle bus ride to the start won't get you out of your pre-race psyche.



WHAT TO THINK ABOUT

THE COURSE: Review the course in detail, where does it start and finish? Is it a point-to-point or loop? What does the elevation chart look like? If there are hills where do they fall along the route and how long are they? Are there any long straightaways? How many water stations are along the course and how far apart are they? Do they all have sport drinks? Is there a split where the half and full or 10K and 5K split from each other?

TEMPERATURE: Look at the average high/low temps, record highs and lows for that date, temperatures the last few years at the event, typical wind patterns and the likelihood of precipitation. You can't predict the weather but you can at least have a good idea of what you might be facing.

RACE MORNING LOGISTICS: Is there a shuttle program? Do you need to buy a ticket in advance? How do shuttles affect the timing of when to get up, when to eat and how long you will be at the start village before race time? Where should you park or get dropped off based on the event's suggestion. Or are you taking public transit? How early do you need to get there based on the start time and taking into consideration parking, traffic, etc. [Assume it will take longer than usual because everyone arrives very close to the same time, leave 30 minutes earlier to avoid the congestion.]

ACCOMMODATIONS: How far is your hotel from the event start/finish? Are there restaurants within walking distance?

EXPO: Where is the expo in relation to your hotel? How much time should you dedicate to getting there, touring the expo and getting back to your hotel, etc.?

MEAL PLANNING: How does your travel affect your meals? How does the time required to get to and from the expo and enjoy the booths affect your meals? Will you need to bring or go shopping for your usual pre-race meal? If there is a shuttle program? Do you need a few extra food items due to the time you spend at the start village pre race?

A big function of success in a sport like running is confidence and retaining as much energy and focus as possible for

race day. This exercise will help eliminate most of your questions and leave you more excited about the race and less apprehensive about what will transpire before you even get to the start line.

Don't assume it will all work out and you will simply figure it out when you get there. This will take away much needed focus and energy for the race itself. Have a plan, know what to expect, stay positive and stay relaxed and your body and mind will reward you come race time.



Two-time U.S. Olympian Alan Culpepper helps runners of all abilities through www.culpeppercoaching.com

THIRSTY?
Find out how many water stations are along the course and how far apart they are.



Retain as much energy and focus as possible for race day.