



► Remind yourself why you're training and know the sacrifice will be worth it.

Goal-Setting Strategies

How to create and stick to achievable racing targets

BY ALAN CULPEPPER

Goals, goal-setting, and being goal-oriented are terms that have been thrown around quite a bit over the last several decades. In fact, they're commonplace on most résumés. Working toward a targeted goal has lost a bit of its luster, however, and the essence of having and setting goals has been minimized to some degree

due to the overuse of the phrase.

In running, successful athletes develop and work toward goals. Having clear and focused goals, and developing strategies to maximize their effectiveness, are critical to success. With the various event options available to runners, many have lost sight of long-term and intermediate goals and simply jump into a race when they feel fit or just have the desire to compete. Without a targeted approach to goal-setting, your physical preparation will often fall short.

As the fall racing season winds up and you begin to make plans for next year, here are a few strategies to consider when thinking about your goals.

WHAT MOTIVATES YOU?

I've found that deep down, many athletes don't really know what motivates them. The process of having a targeted goal begins with being fully conscious of what inspires you. There are no wrong answers, but be honest about what drives you to be successful in your endeavor. We all come from different upbringings, experiences, athletic backgrounds and places in life that draw us to a unique pursuit. Why do you want to go through all that is necessary to reach your goal? Is it out of joy? Anger? Disappointment? Loss? Faith? Freedom? Camaraderie? Recognize your incentive first and be honest about what drives you. That motivation is what you will >>

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GOAL-SETTING TIPS:

- ▶ Be clear and specific about what it is you are trying to accomplish.
- ▶ Set intermediate goals that complement a long-term goal.
- ▶ Shoot high, but recognize the importance of a natural progression.
- ▶ Write your goals down.
- ▶ Review your goals periodically.
- ▶ Remind yourself often why you are training and the sacrifice is worth it.
- ▶ Recognize the simple beauty of applying yourself fully to going after yo
- ▶ **REMEMBER:** Even if you don't hit your goal, there is satisfaction in the process.

>> always fall back on when you need to dig deep in training or in the race itself.

BE CLEAR ON WHAT YOU WANT TO ACCOMPLISH

For some, this is second nature, while others need to step back and assess what it is they want to accomplish so that motivation can be called upon in training. Clear up the confusion before you get started so that your long-term determination is unwavering. This can be in the form of a time goal, placing high within your age group, achieving a personal best, qualifying for a particular race or completing a certain event. Don't be swayed by your peers or your training partners. Think through your long-term goals, as well as what you want to accomplish in building up to them.

DON'T LET THE NATURAL CYCLES OF TRAINING BE A DETERRENT

Understandably, there might be periods during the training process in which your

intensity and commitment dwindle. This is especially true if you lead a busy life (work, school, family, etc.) or you're following a robust training program. Small setbacks, injuries, tough weather conditions, or a poor performance in a tune-up race can all contribute to a wane in motivation. Recognizing your incentive and being clear on what you want to accomplish from the start of the training process are vital, even more so when you are experiencing a down period in your overall motivation. Refer back to these two things often to remind yourself why your goals are important to you and how great you will feel once you reach them. If nothing else, be proud that you saw your goals to fruition, regardless of the end results.



Two-time U.S. Olympian ALAN CULPEPPER helps runners of all abilities via his website at culpeppercoaching.com.