

WHAT I LEARNED FROM MEB

BY ALAN CULPEPPER



It's safe to say that Meb Keflezighi has accomplished what most athletes can only dream of: a silver medal in the Olympic marathon, and wins at both the New York City and Boston marathons. He is most certainly one of America's all-time greatest runners.

Meb and I competed together on two Olympic teams: Sydney in 2000 and Athens in 2004. Without question, Meb truly pushed me to a higher level and helped me get the most out of myself. My best and most significant performances almost always happened when Meb was in the same race.

While Meb and I have very different backgrounds, physiological talents and approaches to training, I learned several important things from him that will help you as well.

LITTLE THINGS MATTER

Meb is the master of the little things. I've never been around another athlete who was so diligent about his stretching, drills, cross-training, diet and sleep. All these areas affect your training and ultimately your performance. Meb is just as committed to the small details as he is to hard intervals or long runs. "Everything matters" is the type of mantra he professes and he is not going to leave something simple to chance when performances come down to seconds.

DON'T STRESS

Meb also masters his stress levels. I've yet to see him get frazzled or unnecessarily stressed, whether it's travel issues, missed flights, lost bags or poor weather conditions. He does not let things out of his control derail his focus. Instead, he remains calm, which allows him to stay singularly focused on those aspects within his control and not get distracted by outside influences.

DON'T LIMIT YOURSELF

Above all else, what I marvel at about Meb is his belief in himself. In Athens, Meb wholeheartedly believed he could win a medal. If I'm being honest, I did not, and, looking back, that is disappointing. Meb went on to win silver and I finished 12th. At the time, I was thrilled with my performance because a month earlier I would have been happy with a top-25 placement. Meb helped me reestablish a higher level of expectation. He proved that if you dream it, you can accomplish it. Many of us limit ourselves and don't believe we can accomplish our biggest goals, but not Meb. He believes—and his results show it.



Two-time U.S. Olympian Alan Culpepper won national titles from the 5K to the marathon. His first book, "Run Like a Champion," is available at VeloPress.com.