



Marathon
2007
Training

ROAD



TESTED

Marathon coaches measure success not by how many runners they get to the starting line, but by how many of them finish. With the help of 10 supercoaches who have gotten more than half a million marathoners across the line, we've collected the best tips, strategies, and training plans to prepare you for your first—or fastest—26.2-miler this fall

BY BOB COOPER PHOTOGRAPHS BY MEREDITH JENKS

MORE PEOPLE ARE RUNNING MARATHONS than ever before. In 2006, there were 410,000 marathon finishers in the United States—an increase of 40 percent from 1995. Not surprisingly, this boom has been followed by a surge in marathon-training plans, ranging from low-mileage beginner programs to supertough elite schedules. Each has its virtues and drawbacks, but if you took the time to compare them all, you wouldn't have enough time to actually train. ☺ So we did the work for you. We assembled a panel of 10 leading coaches whose marathon-training programs are the most road-tested in America, yielding more than half a million successful marathon finishers over the years. Here we present their collective wisdom on the eight most important components of marathon training—from the initial mileage buildup to the final mileage taper. And with their input, we offer two 16-week training schedules for varying abilities—plans you won't find anywhere else. So whether you're a marathon rookie or a veteran with visions of qualifying for Boston, we've got everything you need to know to prepare for—and complete—your best 26.2-miler.



COLLECTIVE WISDOM Mileage Buildup

GRADUALLY INCREASING WEEKLY MILEAGE is the cornerstone of all marathon-training programs. Most plans have you roughly doubling your mileage from 10 to 30 miles per week at the beginning to 30 to 70 miles at the high-mileage week—just before the taper. All but one of our panelists suggest that you achieve this buildup by gradually adding a little distance to nearly every run each week. Galloway, the exception, only ups the distance on Sundays, when long runs are scheduled. “I’ve found that runners who increase their mileage by lengthening midweek and weekend long runs have a higher rate of injury,” he says.

If you were to plot the mileage of most marathon-training schedules on a graph, it would show a straight, slowly rising line followed by a short, steep plunge during the taper. But reality is never that smooth. “Expect peaks and valleys—periods of improvement and stagnation,” says Connelly. And if you miss a day or two of training, just go back to the schedule. “If you miss a whole week, backtrack the same amount of time that you skipped,” say the Finkes. “If you miss more than two weeks, adjust your goals or switch to a later marathon.”

SUPERCOACH STRATEGY ☺ “Make sure that some of your miles are terrain- and environment-specific to the marathon you’ve chosen,” say the Finkes. “Find out about the marathon’s hills, altitude, and average temperature, then do a few of your training runs in similar conditions, even if that means driving to some hills.”

MEET THE MARATHON EXPERTS



1 PAT CONNELLY has coached 30,000 finishers of the L.A. Marathon with a training program that's also used by the Las Vegas and Salt Lake City marathons. (secondwindrunning.com)

2 DAN FINANGER, national director of the Life Time Fitness Running Club, has helped 4,750 marathoners. (lifetimefitness.com)

3 PATTI AND WARREN FINKE, codirectors of the Portland Marathon Training Clinic, certify running coaches for the Road Runners Club of America and have coached 12,000 marathoners. (teamoregon.com)

4 JEFF GALLOWAY, RW columnist and author of

Marathon: You Can Do It, created the Galloway Marathon Training and AIDS Marathon programs, which have assisted 350,000 marathoners since 1978. (jeffgalloway.com)

5 HAL HIGDON, author of *Marathon: The Ultimate Training Guide*, has helped 250,000 marathoners cross the finish line. (halhigdon.com)

6 GREG MCMILLAN is an exercise physiologist and online coach who has advised 500 marathoners. (mcmillanrunning.com)

7 SUSAN PAUL has coached 1,350 runners and is an exercise physiologist and program director for the

Orlando Track Shack Foundation. (trackshack.com)

8 BILL PIERCE, is an exercise science professor who cofounded the Furman (University) Institute of Running and Scientific Training and has advised 5,000 runners. (furman.edu/first)

9 APRIL POWERS, a Team In Training coach since 1992, has had 20,000 Northern California runners follow her marathon schedules. (teamintraining.org)

10 STEVE SISSON is designer of the AT&T Austin Marathon Training Program, head coach of Rogue Training Systems, and has advised 2,000 marathoners. (rogueguyrunning.com)



COLLECTIVE WISDOM

Speedwork

TRAINING MUCH FASTER THAN MARATHON goal pace is unnecessary if your only goal is to finish, but it sure helps if you want to meet a specific time goal. "Faster training is the best way to improve on the three physiological variables that lead to a faster marathon: VO₂ max, lactate threshold, and running economy," says Powers. That's why almost all of our panelists favor some faster training, at least for more experienced runners. Most prescribe below-marathon-pace sessions like tempo runs, track workouts, hill repetitions, and fartlek (speed play), once or twice a week. Four experts suggest track intervals on Tuesdays and a less-intense hard workout (a tempo run, hill repeats, or fartlek) on Thursdays.

The biggest proponent of high-intensity sessions for marathoners is Pierce, who includes two each week on his schedule. "Intensity training is the single best way to improve aerobic capacity," he says. But in general, a track workout totaling three miles at 10-K race pace or a little faster, plus a tempo run of three to six miles between 10-K and marathon goal pace, is typical for most training plans. As the Finkes put it: "A little bit of speedwork goes a long way."

SUPERCOACH STRATEGY "A track workout I call 'The Burn' fine-tunes your pace sense, which is critical to marathon performance," says Sisson. "After a warmup, run 200 meters at marathon goal pace, 200 meters at 10-K race pace, then alternate between those two paces every 200 meters until you can't hit 10-K pace."



TAKE A BREAK
Walk breaks can help beginners extend their mileage without upping injury risk.

COLLECTIVE WISDOM

The Long Run

MANY RUNNERS DREAD THE LONG RUN MORE THAN THEY SHOULD. OUR EXPERT panelists generally call for just a few (three to five) runs above 16 miles, typically spaced a week or two apart in the middle weeks of the buildup. If you start your runs early in the morning to beat the summer heat, stay well fueled with sports drinks and other fast-acting carbs, and run with a partner or training group, you'll likely get through all your long runs with few problems.

But how long is long? Most of our panelists suggest peaking at 20 miles, although Galloway has some runners cover 26 to 29 miles. But you don't have to run all those miles on a Galloway plan, as he recommends walk breaks. "Walk breaks give you control over fatigue, and they reduce injury risk," he says. They range from one minute after every two minutes of running for 12-minute-pace runners to 30 seconds after each four minutes of running for eight-minute-pace runners. The rest of our panelists, however, endorse walk breaks only for slower runners. When you are running, your long-run pace should most often be comfortable and conversational—between marathon goal pace for slower runners and two minutes per mile slower than goal pace for faster runners. (See "Find the Time," page 79.)

SUPERCOACH STRATEGY "Alternate slow-paced long runs with 'fast-finish' long runs—run the last few miles at marathon pace or slightly faster," says McMillan. "Start with a 30-minute fast finish, then add 30 minutes each time, up to 90 minutes, three weeks before the race. This helps you hit marathon pace even when you're tired."

COLLECTIVE WISDOM

Motivation

HALF THE BATTLE OF MARATHON training isn't the running itself, it's finding the resolve to run—day after day. Our panelists agree that first you have to make the commitment, set a realistic goal, and decide on a training plan. Then you have to run a mile—just one at first. Committing yourself every day to running that first mile (or 10 minutes) of each run, they say, will almost always ensure you'll keep going.

All of our pros encourage training with others. "Running partners make the journey easier, more exciting, and more fun," says Finanger. "An iPod can only take you so far," Powers adds. But even with support from regular training partners, you still need to be your own toughest boss. That means posting your training schedule where you'll see it often, treating workouts as unbreakable appointments, and tracking your progress in a running log. Finally, there's the good old carrot-and-stick approach. "Tell yourself you can have something you want, as long as you complete your workout first," say the Finkes. That may mean getting a massage, buying a new pair of shoes, going out to dinner, or just indulging in a bowl of ice cream.

SUPERCOACH STRATEGY "Have everything beside your bed—running clothes, shoes, and anything else you need for your workout—the night before morning runs," says Paul. "Then all you have to do is roll out of bed, dress, and go."



COLLECTIVE WISDOM

Cross-Training

FOR SOME OF OUR PANELISTS, "SUPPLEMENTAL training"—aerobic cross-training activities like cycling and swimming, and gym work like lifting and core exercises—is an acceptable option only on nonrunning days, as long as the workouts are short (less than an hour) and low-intensity. The idea is to focus your energies on your running days, since those are the workouts that are ultimately going to get you across the marathon finish line. Others require cross-training workouts—two or three a week for Galloway and Pierce. "Cross-training offers most of the advantages of running more miles without the pounding that can lead to fatigue and injury," says Pierce. According to Pierce, doing 30 to 60 minutes of strenuous aerobic activities, such as swimming or biking, allows your running muscles to recharge while you still reap cardiovascular and muscular benefits, helping you become fitter even when you're not running.

There is, however, wide agreement among our experts as to which cross-training activities are best for runners, with swimming, cycling, strength training, walking, yoga, and aqua-running topping the list in roughly that order. "Swimming improves circulation and strengthens the upper body, with no stress on the legs," Paul says. Cycling focuses on the legs, but emphasizes different muscles than running and gets you out on your favorite roads and trails. As for gym workouts, mix low-impact cardio time on an elliptical or stairclimber with upper-body strength training (choose light weights with high reps to boost muscle endurance) and core exercises. "Core work improves stride efficiency, lessens fatigue, and reduces injuries," the Finkes say.

SUPERCOACH STRATEGY "Pushups work the upper body, and crunches work the core," says Finanger. "So try 'flapjacks.' Do 10 pushups from your knees, flip over like a flapjack, do 10 crunches, and then keep going back and forth without a break. Do flapjacks two or three times a week and build up from three to six sets."

STAY ON COURSE Expert advice on avoiding injuries

Our panelists' main recommendations on how to stay healthy while marathon training can be summed up in one word: "chill." Icing, ice baths, and finishing runs with a cooldown top their lists. So do taking rest days, getting massages, and stretching.

USE THE REINS Increase the mileage and/or intensity of your workouts too quickly, and you'll also increase injury risk. "An undertrained runner is always better off than an overtrained, injured runner," Finanger says. Always listen to your body and adjust your training schedule when you become overtired or achy.

HONOR REST The importance of easy days—no running, an easy run, or cross-training—can't be overemphasized. "Allowing adequate recovery between workouts is essential to staying uninjured," McMillan says.

COOL IT DOWN Finish every run with at least 10 minutes of slowing to a shuffle or even a walk. "A cooldown allows your body to process lactic acid and redistribute blood flow," Paul says. Reverse the process at the beginning of runs to properly warm up the body.

FEEL THE RUB Paul recommends a light massage right after a long run or a deep-tissue massage two days later.

ADD ICE Ice any sore or tender spots after running. After long runs, consider taking a 10-minute ice bath (mix cold water and a bag of ice). "The recirculation of blood following an ice treatment invigorates the cells with oxygen and promotes recovery," says Sisson.

STRETCH IT OUT Most of the panelists endorse stretching—especially for the hamstrings, quads, calves, lower back, and hip flexors. But you need to stretch correctly or you can increase your injury risk. So have a coach or personal trainer demonstrate proper technique. And never stretch cold muscles, "bounce," or extend stretches to the point of discomfort.

COLLECTIVE WISDOM Training Terms

Here we define a few terms from our experts that are common to both training plans.

CROSS-TRAIN (XT): Whether it's a swim, bike ride, gym workout, or exercise class, this is the day to do anything but run. Maintain an easy to moderate effort for these sessions.

EASY: This is a comfortable, conversational pace that's best for short, easy runs; long, slow runs; and warmup and cooldown jogging—almost all of the running you'll do while marathon training. During weekend long runs, beginners can take walk breaks.

QUALITY: This is harder running, performed over short distances with rest intervals of jogging or walking between. If you aren't breathing hard and leaving your comfort zone, you're not running hard enough.

TEMPO: On these even-paced, moderately hard runs, the effort should be hard enough that conversation is somewhat difficult. Run hard, but in full control. (See "Perfect Tempo," page 37, for more.) Note: The distances shown on tempo-run days include a 1.5-mile warmup jog and 1-mile cooldown jog, so subtract 2.5 miles to determine the tempo-pace segment of that run.

WARMUP AND COOLDOWN: Every tempo run and quality workout should begin with a warmup jog of about 1.5 miles (or 15 minutes) and end with a cooldown jog of about one mile (or 10 minutes)—longer if you need it. The warmup jog should begin at a very easy pace or a walk and the cooldown jog should end that way.

YOUR FIRST DAY

Here is when to start your 16-week training plan for six of the big fall marathons.

Marathon	Race Day	Start Training
Chicago	10/7	6/18
Portland, OR	10/7	6/18
Twin Cities, MN	10/7	6/18
Marine Corps	10/28	7/9
New York City	11/4	7/16
Philadelphia	11/18	7/30

THE ROOKIE PLAN

Dan Finanger's Rookie Plan reflects the training principles endorsed by our expert panelists and was designed for first-time marathoners who seldom run or race beyond six miles.

WEEK	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	TOTAL
1	XT 0-30 min	Easy 3-4 miles	Easy 2-3 miles	Easy 3-4 miles	Rest	Easy 4-5 miles	Easy 2-3 miles	14-19 miles
2	XT 0-30 min	Easy 3-4 miles	Easy 2-3 miles	Easy 3-4 miles	Rest	Easy 5-6 miles	Easy 2-3 miles	15-20 miles
3	XT 0-30 min	Quality* 4-5 miles	Easy 2-3 miles	Tempo 3-4 miles	Rest	Easy 6-7 miles	Easy 2-3 miles	17-22 miles
4	XT 0-45 min	Quality* 4-5 miles	Easy 3-4 miles	Tempo 4-5 miles	Rest	Easy 7-8 miles	Easy 2-3 miles	20-25 miles
5	XT 0-45 min	Quality* 5-6 miles	Easy 3-4 miles	Tempo 4-5 miles	Rest	Easy 8-9 miles	Easy 2-3 miles	22-27 miles
6	XT 0-45 min	Quality* 5-6 miles	Easy 3-4 miles	Tempo 5-6 miles	Rest	Easy 10-11 miles	Easy 2-3 miles	25-30 miles
7	XT 0-60 min	Quality* 6-7 miles	Easy 3-4 miles	Tempo 5-6 miles	Rest	Easy 11-12 miles	Easy 3-4 miles	28-33 miles
8	XT 0-60 min	Quality* 7-8 miles	Easy 3-4 miles	Tempo 6-7 miles	Rest	Easy 13-14 miles	Easy 3-4 miles	32-37 miles
9	XT 0-60 min	Quality* 7-8 miles	Easy 4-5 miles	Tempo 6-7 miles	Rest	Easy 10-11 miles	Easy 3-4 miles	30-35 miles
10	XT 0-90 min	Quality* 7-8 miles	Easy 4-5 miles	Tempo 7-8 miles	Rest	Easy 15-16 miles	Easy 2-3 miles	35-40 miles
11	XT 0-90 min	Quality* 6-7 miles	Easy 4-5 miles	Tempo 6-7 miles	Rest	Easy 17-18 miles	Easy 2-3 miles	35-40 miles
12	XT 0-90 min	Quality* 7-8 miles	Easy 4-5 miles	Tempo 7-8 miles	Rest	Easy 14-15 miles	Easy 3-4 miles	35-40 miles
13	XT 0-90 min	Quality* 7-8 miles	Easy 3-4 miles	Tempo 6-7 miles	Rest	Easy 20 miles	Easy 2-3 miles	38-43 miles
14	XT 0-60 min	Quality* 6-7 miles	Easy 3-4 miles	Tempo 5-6 miles	Rest	Easy 14-15 miles	Rest	28-33 miles
15	XT 0-45 min	Quality* 5-6 miles	Easy 3-4 miles	Tempo 4-5 miles	Rest	Easy 10-11 miles	Rest	22-27 miles
16	XT 0-30 min	Easy 4 miles	Easy 3 miles	Easy 2 miles	Rest	Rest	Marathon	35 miles

*On Quality days, mix and match from the following menu of workouts—or be creative and make up your own. The effort level should be moderately hard—no sprinting—and go easier in the first three and last three weeks of the plan. Always sandwich workouts with a warmup and cooldown.

• **Fartlek:** Pick up the pace for segments of 30 seconds to four minutes, interspersed with easy-paced segments of similar duration. Go by time or run them between trees, street signs, or other landmarks during your run.

• **Kenyan Outbacks:** These are like tempo runs—a few miles at a challenging pace—but with the second half much faster than the first. Example: Run an out-and-back route with the "out" in 20 minutes and the "back" in 17 minutes.

• **Track ladders:** Do a track workout up and down the distance ladder. Early in the buildup the ladder range can be 200 to 800 meters; later on it can rise to 800 to 1600 meters. Example: Run 200, 400, 800, 400, and 200. Include an equal amount of slow jogging to recover between each faster repeat.

• **Yasso 800s:** In the early weeks of the schedule run six 800-meter repeats with 400-meter recovery jogs. Increase

the number to 10 during peak training. (See "Find the Time," page 79, for more on Yasso 800s.)

• **Hill repeats:** Focus on form, not speed. In the early weeks, run four to six times up a moderate hill of 100 to 200 meters at an easy effort. Walk or jog down. In the middle of the training plan, simply do some tempo and long runs on hilly routes. Late in the buildup, run three to eight hill repeats of 100 to 400 meters at a medium to hard effort.

THE VETERAN PLAN

Susan Paul's Veteran Plan integrates the collective wisdom of our marathon experts and is for runners who have done at least a half-marathon and can easily run 13 miles.

WEEK	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	TOTAL
1	XT 45 min	Quality #1	Easy 5 miles	Tempo 6.5 miles	Rest	Pace 14 miles	XT 45 min or Easy 5 miles	31.5-36.5 miles
2	XT 45 min	Quality #2	Easy 5 miles	Tempo 7.5 miles or Hills	Rest	Pace 16 miles	XT 45 min or Easy 5 miles	31-39.5 miles
3	XT 45 min	Quality #3	Easy 5 miles	Tempo 8.5 miles	Rest	Pace-Plus 18 miles	XT 45 min or Easy 5 miles	37.5-42.5 miles
4	XT 45 min	Quality #4	Easy 6 miles	Tempo 6.5 miles	Rest	Pace-Plus 20 miles	XT 45 min or Easy 5 miles	39.5-44.5 miles
5	XT 45 min	Quality #5	Easy 6 miles	Tempo 8.5 miles or Hills	Rest	Pace 14 miles	XT 45 min or Easy 5 miles	31-40.5 miles
6	XT 45 min	Quality #6	Easy 6 miles	Tempo 8.5 miles	Rest	Pace 18 miles	XT 45 min or Easy 5 miles	39.5-44.5 miles
7	XT 45 min	Quality #3	Easy 6 miles	Tempo 8.5 miles	Rest	Pace-Plus 20 miles	XT 45 min or Easy 5 miles	40.5-45.5 miles
8	XT 45 min	Quality #5	Easy 6 miles	Tempo 8.5 miles or Hills	Rest	Pace 16 miles	XT 45 min or Easy 5 miles	33-42.5 miles
9	XT 45 min	Quality #6	Easy 6 miles	Tempo 8.5 miles	Rest	Pace 18 miles	XT 45 min or Easy 5 miles	39.5-44.5 miles
10	XT 45 min	Quality #4	Easy 6 miles	Pace 8.5 miles	Rest	Pace-Plus 22 miles	XT 45 min or Easy 5 miles	43.5-48.5 miles
11	XT 45 min	Quality #5	Easy 6 miles	Tempo 8.5 miles or Hills	Rest	Pace 16 miles	XT 45 min or Easy 5 miles	33-42.5 miles
12	XT 45 min	Quality #6	Easy 6 miles	Tempo 8.5 miles	Rest	Pace 18 miles	XT 45 min or Easy 5 miles	39.5-44.5 miles
13	XT 45 min	Quality #3	Easy 6 miles	Tempo 8.5 miles	Rest	Pace-Plus 20 miles	XT 45 min or Easy 5 miles	40.5-44.5 miles
14	XT 45 min	Quality #5	Easy 5 miles	Tempo 8.5 miles	Rest	Pace 14 miles	XT 45 min	34.5 miles
15	XT 45 min	Quality #1	Easy 5 miles	Tempo 6.5 miles	Rest	Pace 10 miles	XT 45 min	27.5 miles
16	XT 45 min	Quality #7	Rest	Pace 3 miles	Rest	Jog 2 miles	Marathon	33.5 miles

• **Pace:** Start about 45 seconds per mile slower than marathon goal pace and gradually speed up to finish right on marathon goal pace.

• **Pace-Plus:** Run 20 to 50 seconds slower per mile than marathon goal pace.

• **Hills:** Do 6 to 8 repeats of a 200- to 400-meter hill at tempo-run effort. Jog down.

• **Quality #1:** 5 x 1000 meters at 5-K race pace with 2-minute rec. walk/jog.

• **Quality #2:** 6 x 800 meters at 10-K race pace with 90-second rec. walk/jog.

• **Quality #3:** Three sets: 1 x 1200 meters at 10-K race pace (1-minute rec.), 1 x 400 at 5-K

race pace (3-minute rec.).

• **Quality #4:** 4 x 1600 meters at 10-K race pace with 3-minute rec. walk/jog.

• **Quality #5:** 8 x 800 meters at 10-K race pace with 90-second rec. walk/jog.

• **Quality #6:** 400 meters at 5-K pace (30-second rec.), 800 at 10-K pace (90-second rec.), 1200 at 10-K pace (2-minute rec.), 1600 at 10-K pace (3-minute rec.).

• **Quality #7:** 2 x 1600 meters at 10-K pace (2-minute rec.), 800 at 10-K pace (90-second rec.), 400 at 5-K pace.

• **Quality #8:** 2 x 1600 meters at marathon goal pace with 3-minute rec. walk/jog.



COLLECTIVE WISDOM

Fueling Up

PROPER NUTRITION AND HYDRATION during marathon training is most important the night before and the day of your long runs. All experts stress the importance of using your long training runs to develop an appropriate eating and drinking plan. "Figure out what combination of foods and liquids works for you," says Higdon. "Then you can eat and drink the same things during the marathon."

This trial-and-error approach also applies to your prerun fueling, which should emphasize easily digestible foods that are high in carbohydrates and lower in fat and fiber (see "Works for You," page 57). Then there's postrun eating. "Within 15 minutes after a long run, take in a carb-protein drink like a recovery sports shake," says McMillan. "In the next half hour, eat a carb-protein food like an energy bar. And within two hours after the run, eat a meal. This routine will help you recover much faster."

Since you'll most likely be doing your long runs on hot summer weekends, make sure you have fluids available to you along the way. Sports drinks contain carbs to keep you energized and electrolytes to help replenish the minerals lost through sweat. So either carry some with you or stash it somewhere along your course (see "Drink Up," page 105).

SUPERCOCOACH STRATEGY "Taking energy gels with a sports drink can put too much sugar in the GI tract at once, causing stomach cramps or diarrhea," says Paul. "Wash the gels down with plain water."

FIND THE TIME How to pick your perfect pace

Our panelists offered three ways to choose a realistic marathon time goal, which will help you decide how fast to train and how fast to run on race day.

TUNE-UP RACES ☑ Run one or two all-out tune-up races in the weeks before the marathon taper to get a time that can be converted to a sensible marathon goal time. Try Greg McMillan's "McMillan Running Calculator" (at mcmillanrunning.com) to convert your race times to marathon-equivalent times. Just remember that the longer the race, the more accurate the

"conversion"—and the more time you need to allow between the tune-up race and the marathon itself (at least two weeks for a 5-K; four weeks for a half-marathon).

YASSO 800s ☑ A number of our panelists suggested doing this workout to help you determine a realistic marathon pace. Three or four weeks before the marathon,

do a track workout of 10 x 800 meters with a 400-meter jog. You should be spent after the last repeat. The average of your 800 times is a good barometer of how fast you can run in the marathon—but in hours and minutes instead of minutes and seconds.

MAGIC MILES ☑ Jeff Galloway has his runners do a "magic mile"—an all-out mile on the track after a warmup—once every three or four weeks. Multiply that time by 1.3, he says, and you get a good marathon-pace goal.

COLLECTIVE WISDOM

Tune-up Races

TUNE-UPS CAN BE RACES OR TRAINING RUNS AT ANY DISTANCE SHORTER THAN THE marathon that help you gauge your fitness before race day. While our panelists differ on the details of how many tune-ups you should run, they all agree that tune-ups are valuable. "If possible, do your tune-ups at the same time of day as the marathon, run them on a similar course, wear the shoes and clothes you plan to race in, and eat and drink the same things," says Connelly. "By leaving nothing untested, the only surprises in the marathon will be pleasant ones."

You can do one or two tune-up races before your taper or treat a couple long runs as tune-ups. Tune-up options range from racing a 5-K in the place of a track workout to running a half-marathon as a long-run substitute. There's no need to taper for tune-up races, so just train through them according to your schedule.

SUPERCOACH STRATEGY ☑ "Beginners shouldn't do any all-out races before the marathon," says Higdon, "but experienced marathoners can run an all-out half-marathon at least four weeks before the marathon in place of a long run. Race it, then convert the time to a marathon equivalent." (See "Find the Time," above.)

DRESS REHEARSAL
Break in your racing gear during your long training runs.



COLLECTIVE WISDOM

The Taper

REST BECOMES THE PRIMARY FOCUS IN the last two to four weeks before the marathon, after the last long run, when mileage drops to only a few miles a day in the last few days before the race. Why taper? "You need fresh legs to perform well, especially in a race as long as the marathon," says Pierce. "There is strong scientific evidence for this. Tapering increases aerobic enzymes and muscle glycogen, and even produces changes in the brain that let you recruit more muscle mass. And of course, it lets you mentally recharge after all the training."

Of all of our panelists, McMillan's approach to the taper is the most different. "A long, significant taper takes your body out of its training routine and often causes runners to get stale," he says. "I prefer to keep the engine revved with faster workouts while resting the body with only a slight reduction in mileage." Retaining faster workouts is actually part of most of the panelists' schedules. Seven panelists, in fact, schedule a light speed workout just five days before the marathon. "It wakes up your body and mind," says Connelly, "and opens up the lungs and arteries."

SUPERCOACH STRATEGY ☑ "Run one marathon-goal-pace mile at the beginning and end of your high-intensity workouts in the first two weeks of a three-week taper," says Powers, "and one goal-pace mile at the beginning of a high-intensity workout the last week. This makes it easier to run race pace in the early miles of the marathon." ☑