



THE SLACKER'S GUIDE TO RUNNING

Training six days a week isn't for everyone. Introducing the BUSY MAN'S MARATHON PLAN. by GEOFF VAN DYKE

LAST FALL I DECIDED TO RUN A half-marathon. There was only one catch: My wife was in her third trimester with our first child, and between work and running errands for the mommy to be, I didn't have time to train six days a week, long the standard for marathon prep. I needed some flexibility. So I started looking around for training programs that would keep me fit and improve my endurance without ruling my life.

Little did I know that "less is more" endurance training programs, which require run-

ning as few as three days a week, have become the rage as more recreational runners train for half- and full marathons. "I don't think there's any question that it's a major trend," says Bill Pierce, co-founder of the Furman Institute of Running & Scientific Training (FIRST) and co-author of *Run Less, Run Faster*.

The less-is-more approach works because it's efficient; each workout targets a different energy system. First you might be doing short, fast intervals followed by recovery periods, which forces your body to use oxygen more efficiently. Next, "tempo" intervals, between

three and six miles (or more) at just above race pace, will help you run faster for longer. The week's final workout is usually the infamous long run of anywhere from eight to 15 miles.

Scott Bass, a 39-year-old marathoner from Atlanta, switched to the FIRST program after suffering three stress fractures from over-training. The three-day-a-week program, which also calls for two days of cross-training, helped him recover from his injuries. "It also gave me the chance to fit the training into my schedule, which is pretty crazy," says Bass, a Merrill Lynch VP with two young kids. Last year he finished the Boston Marathon in 2:59, four minutes faster than his previous best.


The program I followed involved two hard tempo runs during the week and a long, steady endurance run on the weekend, augmented by two days a week of cross-training (I chose cycling). It wasn't easy; toward the end of the program I was doing two 20-minute tempo intervals at 70 to 80 percent of my max heart rate over the course of a seven-mile run. But after eight weeks I arrived at the starting line healthy, fit, and rested.

Race day began with a classic South Florida deluge, but once the rain stopped I settled into an easy pace for the first 10K. I turned the screws a bit after that, and I had plenty of juice left for the final two miles. I didn't break any records, but I did run the second half faster than the first. I had fun, suffered minimally, and finished comfortably in the middle of the pack. Next time I'll go for a full marathon — training three days a week, naturally.



EIGHT WEEKS TO A HALF-MARATHON

Running coach Greg McMillan developed this training plan specifically for Men's Journal readers. If you're new to running spend a couple of weeks building up a base with three-to-five-mile runs. For more details go to mcmillanrunning.com.

	WEEK 1	WEEK 2	WEEK 3	WEEK 4	WEEK 5	WEEK 6	WEEK 7	WEEK 8
TUESDAY	30-minute easy run	30-minute easy run	30-to-40-minute easy run	Stride workout: 15-minute jog; 6 to 8 strides at 15 seconds each; 15-minute jog	30-to-40-minute easy run	Speed workout: 15-minute jog; 6 to 8 2-minute sprints at 90%, 1-minute recovery jog between	40-to-50-minute easy run	30-minute easy run
THURSDAY	Stride workout*: 15-minute warm-up jog; 6 to 8 strides at 15 seconds each; 15-minute jog	Progression run: 40 minutes total, with the last 10 minutes at a medium-hard effort	Stride workout: 15-minute warm-up jog; 6 to 8 strides at 20 seconds each; 15-minute jog	Stamina: 15-minute jog; 3 medium-hard 8-minute intervals, 3-minute jog between; 15-minute jog	Stamina: 15-minute jog; 3 medium-hard 10-minute sprints, 3-minute jog between; 15-minute jog	Progression run: 50 minutes total, with the last 20 minutes at a medium-hard effort	Stamina: 15-minute jog; 3 medium-hard 10-minute sprints, 3-minute recovery jog; 15-minute jog	Stride workout: 15-minute warm-up jog; 6 to 8 strides at 25 seconds each; 15-minute jog
SATURDAY/SUNDAY	Long run: 4 to 5 miles steady	Long run: 6 to 7 miles steady	Long run: 7 to 8 miles; try to run the last 2 miles slightly faster.	Long run: 7 to 8 miles steady	Long run: 8 to 10 miles; try to run the last 2 miles slightly faster.	Long run: 10 to 12 miles; try to run the last 2 miles slightly faster.	Long run: 9 to 11 miles steady	RACE: Half-marathon, 13.1 miles

*Strides are short bursts of faster running, starting at around 75 percent of your max effort and building to about 95 percent. Do a one-minute recovery jog between each interval.