



Your Better Half

If you're looking to run a half-marathon this year, we have the

BY DAVE KUEHLS / PHOTOGRAPH BY RANDY HARRIS



perfect training program for you. The best part? You only have to run three days a week



LAST AUGUST WE PUBLISHED a three-day-a-week marathon-training program developed by researchers Bill Pierce and Scott Murr called the Furman Institute of Running and Scientific Training program, or FIRST plan. After 16 weeks on this no-frills program, 13 veteran marathoners improved on their most recent times by an average of almost 20 minutes at the December 2004 Kiawah Island Marathon in South Carolina.

Three months ago, at the 2005 edition of Kiawah, 17 more FIRST graduates—veteran marathoners all—took on the 26.2 miles once again, and 14 of them ran PRs.

Frankly, that's all the proof we needed that this program works. And not just for the marathon. With Pierce's help, we came up with a three-day-a-week half-marathon program that's just as good as the original—maybe even better.

As with the original marathon plan, this program includes eight essential principles. They are:

ONE. You can follow it without a lot of hassle. Thanks to the relatively low mileage the plan requires, your risk of overtraining and burnout is lower. It's also a program that will teach you a solid, positive, life-long approach to running.

TWO. You run just three days a week. And each run—speed, tempo, long—has a specific purpose. The speedwork makes you faster; the tempo run raises your lactate threshold, enabling you to hold a faster pace during the half; and the long run increases your endurance.

THREE. You run a variety of speedwork: 400s, 800s, and 1600-meter repeats. And make no mistake about it: There is real speed in these speed sessions, so run them with a fast friend.

FOUR. You do your tempo run—from two miles to eight miles—at faster than normal training pace, or 15 seconds slower than your targeted half-marathon pace.

FIVE. You gradually build up your long run to 12 miles, not the 20 needed for the marathon. And you do those long runs at a slightly faster pace than you would do on a normal long run.

SIX. You cross-train twice a week. Easily at first, but as you get more fit, you raise the intensity, which will make you fitter.

SEVEN. You're asked not to train or race through pain or a slew of missed workouts due to sickness or busy times at work. Pierce believes if outside forces keep you from training consistently, you should reschedule your race when you have time to train.

EIGHT. You taper for two weeks (not the three needed for the marathon). This will ensure that you step up to the starting line rested, injury-free, and ready to reach your goal time.

But does all this translate to the half-marathon? "Definitely," says Pierce. In fact, he says, this program is a great fit for the half-marathon, because you don't need as much endurance to run a half.

Finally, we're going to tailor this program specifically to your goal finish time. That way, all you have to do is run three days a week at the exact paces prescribed.

To get started, use the formula on the right to determine your half-marathon goal time. Then plug in the paces for the three workouts each week, as shown in the training schedule on the opposite page.

PICKING YOUR GOAL TIME

Use your current race results to determine your half-marathon race pace, then check out the chart below to find your corresponding goal time.

To find your half-marathon mile pace (HMP) and goal time, take either your...

- 1) Current 5-K mile pace and add 35 seconds per mile for your HMP and goal time (see chart below).
- 2) Current 10-K mile pace and add 20 seconds per mile for your HMP.
- 3) Current marathon mile pace and subtract 20 seconds per mile for your HMP.

NOTE: If you don't have a current PR for any of the above, simply go to the track or a well-marked flat trail or road and run three miles as fast as you can. Then use the corresponding formula from number 1 above to find your half-marathon per mile pace and goal time.

HMP	HM Goal Time
6:52	1:30
7:02	1:32:08
7:12	1:34:19
7:22	1:36:30
7:32	1:38:41
7:42	1:40:52
7:52	1:43:03
8:02	1:45:14
8:12	1:47:25
8:22	1:49:36
8:32	1:51:47
8:42	1:53:38
8:52	1:56:09
9:02	1:58:20
9:12	2:00:31
9:22	2:02:42
9:32	2:04:53
9:42	2:07:04
9:52	2:09:15
10:02	2:11:26
10:12	2:13:37
10:22	2:15:48
10:32	2:17:59
10:42	2:20:10
10:52	2:22:21
11:02	2:24:32

THE TRAINING RUNS

This half-marathon program includes three time-targeted runs each week. On Tuesday, speedwork. On Thursday, a tempo run. On Saturday or Sunday, the long run. (More on what to do the rest of the week later.)

Since you'll be running only three days a week, these runs might be faster than you're used to, maybe a lot faster. But don't fret. This is because each run serves a purpose—mainly, to make you fitter and faster for your race. "I have trained a lot of runners using these formulas and they have been able to meet the training standards just fine," says Pierce. "The emphasis on intensity for these three sessions provides the runner with stimulation, both physiological and psychological, associated with hard efforts."

SPEEDWORK:

The plan uses three distances—400, 800, and 1600—which should be done on a track or well-measured flat trail. Warm up with a 20-minute jog and cool down after your session with a 10-minute jog. This helps prevent muscle strains, and will keep your legs fresh for the next session.

Sample Speedwork:

20-minute jog. 8 x 400 (at pace specified) with a two-minute recovery jog in between each. Cool down with a 10-minute jog.

Speedwork Times:

400s—HMP, minus 75 seconds, divided by 4
800s—HMP, minus 65 seconds, divided by 2
1600s—HMP, minus 45 seconds

For example, a runner who is targeting a 1:30 half-marathon would be running at a 6:52-per-mile pace. >>

WEEK	TUESDAY	THURSDAY	SAT/SUN
1	4x400	3-mile tempo	6-mile long run
2	4x800	4-mile tempo	8-mile long run
3	3x1600	5-mile tempo	10-mile long run
4	6x400	6-mile tempo	6-mile long run
5	3x1600	4-mile tempo	10-mile long run
6	4x800	8-mile tempo	8-mile long run
7	6x400	6-mile tempo	10-mile long run
8	4x1600	8-mile tempo	12-mile long run
9	3x800	3-mile tempo	6-mile long run
10	4x400	2-mile tempo	Half-marathon

Half-Marathon Nutrition: THE TWO-HOUR RULE

We know all about fueling up during the three-, four-, and five-hour marathon to replace carbohydrate stores. But how about the half? Sports nutritionist and running coach Scott Fischer, M.S., R.D., of Franklin Lakes, New Jersey, recommends that any runner who plans on finishing the half in two hours or more take an energy bar or gel along the way. "Somewhere between seven and 10 miles you'll need to eat it to make sure you have enough energy to finish," he says. "A bit of insurance." Other than that, treat the half just like a marathon. That is, make sure that you eat plenty of carbs each week during training, and make sure you have a carbohydrate-rich meal the night before the race, a breakfast of 500 to 700 calories two hours before the starting time, and a carbohydrate-rich postrace meal, preferably within an hour of finishing.

3 Key Race Strategies: SUCCESS WILL BE YOURS

- 1) **Steady as she goes:** Lock into your race pace early, resisting that urge to pick it up midrace. During the last three to four miles, concentrate on maintaining pace. This is when the initial smooth effort becomes more of a challenge.
- 2) **Think 5-5-5-K:** A great marathon strategy is breaking it into three runs: A 10-miler. Another 10-miler. Then a 10-K. This half-marathon strategy simply cuts those segments in half. For the first five miles concentrate on staying smooth and relaxed. For the next five miles, focus on running strong and steady. For the last three miles, push to the finish.
- 3) **Call it a tempo run:** This strategy is especially good for novice racers. Essentially, you need to get to the starting line ready to run a long tempo run that is just one mile longer than your longest training run—albeit faster this time. Warm up with a short 10-minute jog, and when the gun goes off, just start into your "tempo."