

## Pacing the Marathon

The marathon is not an event to experiment with pacing. The margin-for-error is too narrow. Even a slight deviation from perfect pacing could result in disaster. Most people will run out of energy, even with a conservative goal pace and perfect pacing.

Of course, you'll want the fastest possible finish time. But that's your first potential pitfall. A difference of 30-seconds-per-mile is only about 12 minutes added (or subtracted) from a 5-hour finish time. And twelve minutes is only four percent of that time. Yet, that four percent could make a huge difference in your race-day experience.

Enjoying the race should be your primary consideration, not your finish time. It's better to choose an average pace that enables you to finish with some energy, instead of none. You should be cruising and able to experience the race around you, rather than using tunnel vision to count telephone poles, wishing you were done. Before the race, running out of energy may seem immaterial compared with a finish time you can brag about. Most people won't know the difference between four and five hours. So, tell them you ran the faster time, while you draw your own conclusions.

Remember, during the race, your finish time could easily become immaterial compared with just getting through the last few miles. That's not the mental space to be in at the end of your annual goal event. So, let's say you decide to aim for an average pace you know you can achieve with relative ease. With that experience in hand, you can assume—with better training—that you'll be able to run faster with the same cruising effort next year.

Meanwhile, you'll have a race to run. So, how will you pace it using a BC Endurance pacing plan. The plan is really three plans in one: goal pace, best pace, and disaster pace. You get to choose your plan on marathon morning based on the weather and your energy, which might be good but could be bad. Regardless, see about using the plan to get into a rhythm and a sustainable pace. You should set a GPS monitor that beeps at you if you go faster than the mile-by-mile plan. More importantly, you've got to make up your mind to follow the plan assiduously. Even if you have great energy.

BC's many careful pacing studies indicate that even slight deviations from a proper pacing plan markedly increase your chances of crashing well before the finish. There are so many sections where you can go wrong: the start to 10K, the four miles around Diamond Head, and the 10-miles between Kahala Mall around Hawaii Kai and back to the mall. It will seem tedious to go at the same slow, held-back pace for so many miles. It's okay to distract yourself by whatever means, as long as you maintain a sustainable pace.

The fun of the race is in flying past people who went too fast at some earlier point. Those are your competitors. You should learn to take satisfaction by catching them and beating them, instead of beating an elusive and unrealistic finish time spurred by an ambitious delusion.