



## **What to do if you missed your Final and most crucial LONG RUN?**

As any educated marathoner knows, it is that crucial long run, done 3 weeks out, that can have the most determination on whether you will have a successful day when you line up at the starting line. Get it done, and done at proper pacing, and you are set and ready for race day. A bad day, or missing the run altogether, well, this can be a recipe for trouble on race day.

But life does not always work out right, and sometimes we do miss on this important training day, or we come up short. What to do then?

As the possibilities are endless, let's assume for a moment you have decided to STILL RUN THE MARATHON AS PLANNED IN 3 WEEKS TIME. There is an option to "put off" the race to another one, and I know many marathoners who have done this. But let's assume here, for the sake of discussion, you are going ahead.

All is NOT lost and there are things you can do. And also WRONG things to do. So having seen a lot of people try to "make up" for missing the final long run, let me sort through it for you.

### ***WHAT NOT TO DO:***

1. Do not wait another week, or two, and try to make it up close to marathon day. The data is very clear---you need a full 3 weeks recovery from the final long run to heal and get to the starting line with fresh legs. The final 3 weeks is for tapering—not for the most brutal training in your program! If you do this, the risks are very high you will get to the starting line with "dead legs" and struggle to achieve your goals during the race.
2. Do not ignore it and just say, "Well I have done enough training, I will just come to the race and do it." Remember, long run is the key to any beginners program, and the final long run is the most important one of all. If you do this, you shall be under prepared for a grueling 42 Kilometers.

## ***SO, WHAT TO DO?***

There is a good option out there. It is called **“Back to back hard days”** and it is a training technique created for the Comrades Marathon in South Africa (89 Kilometers, and frankly I believe the hardest race in the world as it has a 12 hour time limit and crosses 4 major climbs). The program is designed by Dr. Tim Noakes, who many feel is THE guru of running physiology, and the success rate of this program for getting runners to finish this grueling race in under 12 hours is impressive. Now, you may be thinking, “Well Jim is this is so, why did you not tell us about this earlier?” The reason is, this is not a race for beginner marathoners, in fact one must run a marathon in under 5 hours to even enter! So this technique is not a novice marathoners technique. It does risk some injury for a beginner. But if you have missed the main long run, I have to offer up solutions. I do believe this can work. But you have to do it.

Here’s how it works.

If you missed the long run, IN ITS ENTIRETY, well, what you have to do, is within the next 4 days (we need to do it within the 3 weeks prior to race to allow recovery) is to take the **total distance (or time) of your final long run, multiply it by 1.33, and then do 60% on day one (say Tuesday) and 40% on Wednesday.** It has to be back to back so you actually run day 2 on a bit tired legs. This plus the extra distance spread out over two days, will stimulate the cellular adaptations to get you to cover the full 42.2 KMs. So for example, if your final long run called for 27 Kilometers and you missed. What you would do is cover a total of 36 Kilometers over a 2 day period. On day 1, say Tuesday following, you would run 21.5 KMs. On Wednesday you would rise up, and at same time of day, you would run 14.5 KMs. It’s not perfect, as it is not all in one, but Comrades experience shows, the system of back to back hard days really works. If the program is time based, you can do the same math for MINUTES.

If you tried to do your final long run and CAME UP SHORT, well the formula is different. **What you do is subtract from your TARGET DISTANCE your ACTUAL DISTANCE. You are left with what you fell short on training day. Take this distance left and multiply by 1.5.** Then run this distance THE VERY NEXT DAY. So for example, if your target was 27 KMS and you only made it 21, you subtract 21 from 27. This leaves you with 6 KMs miss. Your target for the NEXT DAY would be 6 KMs x 1.5= 9KMS. The very next day, you get up and run 9 KMs. Again you can do the same formulas for TIME if your program is time based. And again it is not perfect, but it will work.

So bottom line? Yes this long run is very crucial, but no need to fret and worry if something went wrong. We all get sick, or have a bad day, or get hit with heat that takes our energy away. I’ve had many bad days on the road. There is a way to make up for it.

Good luck folks.

Jim Lafferty