

10 tips for experienced marathoners

No matter how many marathon medals you've collected or how confident you feel standing 26.2 miles from the finish line, you can never gather enough information on how to maximize your performance. "I'll take all the tips I can get," Tera Moody, who'll compete in her sixth Bank of America Chicago Marathon on Oct. 11 and first since finishing ninth in 2010 with a PR of 2:30:53, says. "At the same time, you don't want to try something new on race day." These 10 tips will help on race day, the days leading up to it and the days that follow.

BY MATT BEARDMORE | PHOTOS BY ALI ENGIN

1 EAT RIGHT

"I think some people would disagree, but the week of the race is not the time to diet," Moody says. "You are going to need the extra fuel. No, you don't need to completely gorge on pasta the night before the race. But about three days out I start making sure I am eating a very high carbohydrate diet. You also need fats in there as well."

2 REST

"It's very common for people to get a restless night sleep the night before a race," Chicago-based running coach Brendan Cournane, who's completed 89 marathons, including at least one in all 50 states and one on all seven continents, says. "Just recognize if your sleep on Friday, Thursday and Wednesday is good, it's more important than if your sleep the night before [a Sunday race] is interrupted."

3 WATCH THE WEATHER

You can't control the temperature or wind, but you can adjust to Mother Nature. "If it looks like it's going to be warm late in the race, you might want to run faster earlier in the race," area running coach Bill Leach says. "Or you might want to take advantage of wind that would favor you running faster."

4 STAY LOOSE

Moody prefers a "short shakeout of about three miles with some strides just to loosen up [the day before a marathon]," while Leach likes his runners to do something short and intense that day.

"It elevates the central nervous system to a higher level of readiness for racing situations, and it reminds them of the inevitable discomfort they're going to experience the next day," he says.



5 CHANNEL YOUR MIND'S POWER

"There's always a point in a race when you want to quit," Meg Sullivan, who has completed eight marathons, including five in Chicago and is the training program manager for the Chicago Area Runners Association, says. "Your head will start playing games with you, but you'll be amazed what your legs can do the more positive you stay."

Cournane stresses the power of visualization. "If your legs are sore, take the focus away from your legs and focus on your arms," he says. "You forget about how tired your legs are."

6 SUPPORT OF FAMILY AND FRIENDS

"The Chicago course is amazing and going through all the neighborhoods is unbelievable," Sullivan says, "but it can get a little lonely right around [miles] 17 and 18 and heading into Chinatown since there aren't as many supporters there."

7 RUN YOUR RACE

While race day conditions may impact your overall pace, Moody advises to "not go out ahead of your planned

pace. You will not bank time and it will only come back to haunt you."

8 REFUEL

"It's critical to focus on diet immediately after the race," Sullivan says. "It's important to get your body to start healing itself right away."

9 MESSAGES FOR RECOVERY

"A good massage therapist can help alleviate some of those microtears [in the muscles]," Cournane says. "I prefer 24 to 48 hours later so the body gets a chance to recuperate."

10 RECOVER

"After the race, don't rush back into training," Moody says. "I always shoot for two weeks totally off but end up making it only a week to 10 days before starting yoga or jogging. But nothing hard for a month or so if you really went to the well. I also think walking around a lot the day after helps. And it's great if you are in Chicago! Stay a day or two after the race so you can enjoy all this amazing city has to offer."



Number of times the Bank of America Chicago Marathon has occurred. This year's race will be the 38th running of the marathon.