

Half Marathon Training

Hi! Welcome to what is most likely a very different approach to any running program than you might be used to, where mileage means a whole lot less than your intensity and your...drum roll please...muscular strength. Crazy I know, yet if you do the research you will find that there is a direct correlation between your maximum strength indicators and your running speed. Also, cross-training has been shown to help reduce the over-use injuries of running alone. The running protocol to follow is based on the assumption that you are strength training as well, so while the running protocols are great you will not tap into their full potential unless you are also doing them in conjunction with strength AND cross training.

Let's give my client Jill as a perfect example. Jill does lifting for strength three times a week, usually followed by some kind of metabolic conditioning (CrossFit), and then runs three times a week in the EXACT same protocol style as below (one short interval, one medium interval, and one time trial). Using this type of training Jill was able to get MUCH faster in her races while actually reducing her training run mileage significantly. So, let's take a look at the running portion of the program.

WALK-RUN			
WEEK	SHORT	MEDIUM	TIME TRIAL
1	30sec:3mins x 6 at 85% effort	5mins:6mins x 4 at 90%	1 miles
2	45sec:3mins x 5 at 85% effort	10mins:6mins x 3 at 90%	1.5 miles
3	1min:4mins x 5 at 85% effort	15mins:5mins x 3 SLED DRAG at 90%	2 miles
4	3 mins:10mins x 2 at 100% effort	5mins:4mins x 5 at 85%	1.5 miles
5	35sec:3mins x 6 at 85% effort	10mins:5mins x 3 at 85%	2 miles
6	50sec:3mins x 5 at 85% effort	15mins:4mins x 3 SLED DRAG at 85%	2.5 miles
7	65sec:3mins x 5 at 85% effort	5mins:5mins x 4 at 90%	2 miles
8	4min:10mins x 2 at 100% effort	10mins:4mins x 4 at 80%	2.5 miles
9	1min:4mins x 5 at 85% effort	15mins:3mins x 4 SLED DRAG at 80%	3 miles
10	75sec:4mins x 4 at 85% effort	5mins:5mins x 4 at 90%	2.5 miles
11	90sec:4mins x 4 at 85% effort	20mins:8mins x 2 at 80%	3 miles
12	5min:12mins x 2 at 100% effort	45min SLED DRAG AT 70%	4 miles
RUN ENTIRE HALF			
WEEK	SHORT	MEDIUM	TIME TRIAL

1	30sec:3mins x 8 at 85% effort	5mins:6mins x 4 at 90%	3 miles
2	45sec:3mins x 7 at 85% effort	10mins:6mins x 3 at 90%	4 miles
3	1min:4mins x 7 at 85% effort	15mins:5mins x 3 at 90%	5 miles
4	3 mins:10mins x 2 at 100% effort	10mins:5mins x 4 at 80%	4 miles
5	35sec:3mins x 8 at 85% effort	20mins:10mins x 3 at 80%	5 miles
6	50sec:3mins x 7 at 85% effort	30mins:15mins x 2-3 at 85%	6 miles
7	65sec:3mins x 7 at 85% effort	35mins:12mins x 2-3 at 75%	5 miles
8	4min:10mins x 2 at 100% effort	40mins:15mins x2 at 75%	6 miles
9	1min:4mins x 7 at 85% effort	45mins:12mins x2 at 70%	7 miles
10	75sec:4mins x 6 at 85% effort	5mins:6mins x 4 at 90%	6 miles
11	90sec:4mins x 6 at 85% effort	10mins:6mins x 3 at 90%	7 miles
12	5min:12mins x 2 at 100% effort	15mins:5mins x 3 at 90%	8 miles

Gibberish, right?! Ok, so let's decipher this.

The first twelve week program is for those just getting into running and may not be running the entire half marathon. Actually, for most people, a walk-run protocol might be far faster than trying to run the whole thing straight through. Setting a watch for one minute of running, one minute of power walking, then two minutes of running and one minute walk, increasing the run portion to tolerance is a great way to stay fast and maintain proper running form when actually running. Slow, tired 'trotting' is usually what leads to injuries. Plus, having micro-goals, run two minutes, is easier to achieve and maintain (and celebrate!) than one lonnng big goal, run entire distance, which might kill morale if you do not succeed early on.

The second twelve week program is for those who think they will be running the entire thing and looking to shave some time off. The first thing that everyone seems to notice first is that the longest run is NOT very long, about 3/4th the distance. If you can run even half the target distance *fast*, you sure can run the full distance a bit slower. When doing the time trial distances, this is an ALL OUT 100% effort. You should be VERY out of breath at the end of each of these distances. If you have never run three miles at max capacity, I would suggest you have not really known a runners suffering. Do nothing slow. Slow practice leads to slow races and injury. Running form breaks down at slower speeds where your natural cadence cannot be met, so every time we run long, we are still trying to run it the fastest we can.

The second thing you will notice is a bunch of **numbers**, **:**, and **at**. This is your interval work. It is read like so...

30sec:3mins x 8 at 85% effort.

30sec is your actual running time. So 30 seconds running.

3mins is your REST TIME. So run 30 seconds then rest for 3 minutes.

X 8 is your number of sets. So run 30 seconds then rest for 3 minutes, repeated 8 times.

85% effort is the perceived exertion for every set, based on your MAX exertion for that time. If I could run 100m in 30 secs at full sprint, then I should be getting about 85m on my sets for this particular run.

So run 30 seconds then rest for 3 minutes and repeat 8 times so you can REPEATEDLY achieve 85% each and every sprint.

This may SEEM like a lot of rest but if you are running at your true 85%, you will enjoy every second of that rest to recover enough to maintain that percentage. What do you do during your rest? I usually walk around a bit, get water, and take an evaluation of my body to see if I need some pro-active care before the next one, maybe a quick roll out of my arches or some PNF (proprioceptive neuromuscular facilitation) stretches. DO NOT SKIP OR SHORTEN THE REST!!!! I cannot stress this enough. If you are skipping or shortening the rest, you are not putting out the effort you should and it simply will not work. Remember, everything is based on going FAST when you're actually running so skipping the rest is going to slow you down considerably.

What should you be doing for strength and conditioning? Well, I'm biased....come by NEPA CrossFit for a free one-on-one session so I can show you the proper form, which is VERY important in lifting (far more important than how MUCH you're lifting). If not CrossFit, I would get a personal trainer for a little bit just to make sure you are moving well before attempting lifting alone.

Nutrition. Nutrition. Nutrition. Many of my members tell of how much better their running has become simply by losing weight. Think about it? Would you want to run a half marathon wearing a weighted vest? No. So if you could lose weight, it is the equivalent of taking off a weighted vest. Train. Eat healthy. Sleep. The trifecta of a good program for increased performance.

Jill's testimonial:

“I’ve been running and competing in obstacle course racing since 2014 and since it’s such a unique sport it’s not the easiest to train for. From a running standpoint, I’ve always been told that more miles was the answer to become better and get faster. As soon as I would increase my mileage, I would get nagging injuries so I was desperate to find another alternative.

I came to NEPA Crossfit in the off season of 2017 and told Brennan my goals. He told me that he had the perfect programming for me and I would not have to spend countless hours training. I was skeptical, but wanted to give it a try and see what it was all about. During the first month of training, I not only cut back the time I was at the gym, but also cut back on miles significantly.

After a few months, even though I was running less, I noticed my training runs started to trend faster. When I competed at my first race, I shaved off a ton of time, and this trend continued race after race. I even started finding myself on the Spartan Race podium consistently!

Any running, multi-sport, or obstacle course racing athletes that are looking to get healthier, faster, and stop the nagging injuries need to consider this programming!”

Jillian Heller, Elite Spartan Racer

Brennan Morton is owner of NEPA CrossFit and a Level Three CrossFit Coach. He has completed many triathlons, a few marathons, and an Ironman all with this training protocol. He is a former Marine sniper and team leader in the special ops community.

Check them out at www.nepacrossfit.com