

You Can Run a 50K: It's Not Rocket Science

As I venture to Oregon for my 60th marathon, which really is not significant but is a nice round number, I contemplate the natural next step to the 50K. It is the entry point of The Ultra. It is "only" five more miles but taken lightly can be a nightmare. On the other hand, if your training and nutrition are done properly, it is a great and fulfilling challenge.

I recommend at least two marathons before taking the ultra step. I know, I know, the "Experts" say you should have so many years and so many marathons under your belt before attempting an ultra. These are the same experts that say you should be running at least two years before attempting a marathon. Over the years I have coached hundreds of first time marathoners from sedentary to marathoner in six months. So much for the experts... I am not saying I am right (really, I am but that is very arrogant of me), but if you can do a marathon, then you can run a 50K. By making a few adjustments to your training you can train for both events at the same time, using the marathon as a training run for the 50K. Most marathon schedules call for a two-mile increase to your long run every two weeks. This makes sense to me and is the way I have always trained people. The difference in preparing for a 50K is that you add an additional run the day following your long run.

Let's break this down and make it simple. My first assumption is that you have completed one marathon and grasp the reality of the fatigue that comes with it. My marathon schedule calls for three runs per week, ideally Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, with Saturday being your long training day. To supplement this with your 50K training, you add a run of half the distance on Sunday.

For example, if you ran 10 miles Saturday, you will run 5 miles the next day (or Sunday, I don't want to lose anyone here). Therefore, it would only be logical that if you ran 20 miles on Saturday, you would run 10 miles on Sunday. I know logic and common sense have been on hiatus for a couple of years, but please apply it to your running.

Have you finished your first marathon and want to take on the challenge of the 50K? There is no time like the present, so find one that is about four months out and a marathon that is about three weeks before your 50K. The chances of the dates lining up perfectly are slim but possible, so be flexible in your scheduling.

Assuming you just finished a marathon; take a two-week active rest, running 3 miles three times per week. For your third week, run 3 miles Tuesday and Thursday. Your long run that Saturday should be 12 miles. You will increase 2 miles every two weeks (down week in between), just as you did during

your marathon training. Your Sunday run would be 6 miles (half of Saturday's mileage).

So, your first week would look like this: Tues-3m, Thurs- 3m, Sat - 12m and Sun - 6m. Increase the weekday runs as you see fit but no more than 6 miles per day during the week. Your last hard week of training would be: Tues - 6m, Thurs - 6m, Sat - 22m and Sun - 11m. Then, you would run your marathon two weeks later and the 50K three weeks after your marathon. Between the marathon and 50K, your runs should be easy and short, which means no hills or speed training. I would recommend 3m, 3m, 6m and 3m for those weeks before the 50K, as this will give you a good taper and let your legs rest so you can conquer the 50K.

I know a lot of you out there will be tempted to run more days during the week but that is foolish. More is not better! I have SUCCESSFULLY trained up to a 50-miler this way. You can use Tuesdays for speed or hills, and I like to alternate those workouts, and Thursday is an easy day. Of course, Saturday is to build endurance and Sunday is to get you used to running on tired legs. You will be more than ready with this plan.

There is, of course, more to finishing a 50K than running. You need to make sure you have fine-tuned your fueling. I recommend Hammer products www.hammdernutrition.com for all of your endurance needs. For a 50K, I use Perpetum, but you can also use Hammer Gel and/or Sustained Energy as well as HEED. Whatever you use, make sure you incorporate it into your training each week. Having completed a marathon, this should be already in the works, but it takes a lot of trial and error for some people. Once you find what works for you, stay with it.

This little bit of info should get you through your first 50K, but if you have problems or doubts, maybe you should hire a Koach. www.koachkarl.com