

## The Marathon - What NOT To Do!

Dick Beardsley's race strategy for the second marathon of his life—the one in which he claimed someone handed him a piano at mile 23—is a classic primer on how not to prepare for and run a marathon. He had run his first marathon on a whim when he was in junior college and finished in 2:47:14. Not too bad, especially considering that he hadn't trained for the marathon distance. Two months later he learned of a marathon in nearby Minneapolis. It was Tuesday, and the marathon was on Sunday. He decided to "prepare" himself for this one. Relying upon advice in an article he found in an old running magazine, he decided to fast until the marathon, allowing himself only Gatorade, juice, and water.

On the morning of the marathon, he put on his brand-new pair of running shoes and went out for an eight-mile warm-up. He went out fast in the first few miles of the marathon. He bypassed all the aid stations—didn't everyone know that drinking anything during a race would make you cramp?

Beardsley was still feeling pretty good, despite the blisters on his feet, as he ran past the 20-mile mark where someone had painted the words, "You're at The Wall." And then, just past mile 23, he felt like a sledgehammer had come down on him. "I went from feeling pretty good to where I did not know how I was going to get to the next telephone pole," he said. "I was running with my eyes shut, hallucinating. Without a doubt, that was the worst wall I ever hit." He collapsed at the finish line, severely dehydrated.

It's a testament to Beardsley's superb physical abilities and mental toughness that he managed to finish the race, much less to finish seventh overall.

**Mistake number one:** by fasting the week before the race, he probably started off in a state of near-glycogen depletion. Not eating or drinking during the race was a recipe for glycogen depletion and dehydration. You should eat well the week before the race and for 2 days prior to the race eat foods with high glycemic carbs (see carb load protocol). You should have a large breakfast the day before the race, a good sized lunch and a normal dinner. You should also plan to eat & drink as we have discussed during the race.

**Mistake number two:** running in a brand-new pair of running shoes. It is difficult to maintain your cognitive focus on race-related issues as you are developing painful blisters. Use the same brand and model of shoes you wore for training and wear your race day pair at least once or twice before the race.

**Mistake number three:** His eight-mile warm-up was about seven miles too long. By going out too fast, he probably incurred some lactic acid buildup, which lessened the amount of glucose that he could metabolize later on. Go out slowly and if you don't feel like you are holding back, then you are going too fast. Let the rabbits pass you, and enjoy reeling them in as the race progresses.

Beardsley, of course, learned his lesson well, going on to become one of the best marathoners in the United States and making history in his memorable finish two seconds behind Alberto Salazar in the 1982 Boston Marathon.