

Olathe Half Marathon Pacing Strategy

Fact #1: The body needs to warm up for at least 2 miles. During that time, it goes from an inefficient fuel burning (converting oxygen, sugar/fat, electrolytes to energy) and waste removal (getting rid of lactic acid and built up heat) machine to a more efficient one.

If someone pushes it too hard (even doing even pace) in that time period, they will use up an inordinate amount of stored glycogen while accumulating an inordinate amount of lactic acid to set up an extra amount of fatigue and 'heavy legs' for the final few miles of the half marathon.

We are in the business of preparing our participants for the last 1/3 in a more intelligent and effective manner, so we'll EASE into the half marathon. With a bridge to climb in the first mile and wind a possible factor for the first few miles, it only will exacerbate this situation for anyone determined to set an even pace from the get-go. Besides, the more noticeable hills won't come until the 2nd half of the race so we'd be wise to save a little bit for them. By not respecting the terrain and the body's need to warm up, we'll end up like most other pace teams in races around the country – having little to no one to pace in the final miles since we innocently wasted them in the first 1/3 of the half marathon.

Fact #2: Honor the Domino Effect. Imagine 13 dominos lined up. Which domino has the greatest impact? The first one, right? In the same manner, the first mile is the most crucial, make-or-break mile of the half marathon. Therefore, you need to be the most conservative with this one. Vice versa, the last mile is the least critical so you can afford to be the most aggressive on that one. But, what do most people do? The opposite!

Just like the first mile, the first aid station is the most important, make-or-break aid station to determine how well people can keep their 'gas tank' from going on empty while the last aid station is the least important towards overall race performance. Again, what do most people do? They rush through the first ones until they're forced to walk through the last ones. We'll encourage you to get what you need in the first 8 miles of aid stations if you want to have any hope of getting what you want in the last 5.1 miles. And, it begins most importantly with the first aid station.

Fact #3: Many people will slow down in the final miles. The accumulating fatigue makes it likely that many people will start to go slower, even if they replenish enough at the aid stations. Therefore, it's smart to get back the time we'll give in the beginning before dealing with the gradual incline in the last 2 miles. The time to do so is after the warm up and up until this point – i.e. miles 4 to 11. You're body is efficient, it's fresh, and the adrenaline has worn off so you won't get too crazy. By creating a cushion, we'll be able to slow down a little and still be on pace to achieve your time goal.

Pacing Strategy: "Hold back, settle into a strong rhythm, and hang in there."

Hold back – We'll run the first mile about 30 seconds per mile slower than the average pace of your goal time to properly warm up. We'll run the second mile about 10-15 seconds per mile slower than the average pace of your goal time to continue the transition from warm up to settling in. Finally, we'll run the 3rd mile at the average pace effort of your goal time to complete the transition.

Settle into a strong, but doable rhythm – Then, we'll run about 5-10 seconds faster per mile than the average pace of your goal time to get back the time we gave at the beginning and create a small cushion for the end.

Hang in there – We'll give lots of encouragement to you at this time, but know that you can slow back down to 10-15 seconds slower than goal pace (it'll be 20-30 seconds slower than what they've been averaging so it should be doable for most people). Our job is to set the actual pace so even if participants lose contact, we may get 1 or 2 that pick it up in the final mile to finish with us. If they do, they'll want to know they ran at least 1 second faster than their goal time (i.e. a 1:59:59 for the 2:00 group).

***But, finish strong if you feel good!** At the 2008 Kansas City Half Marathon, we found that many of the runners in our pace teams felt good and picked it up to leave the pacers behind, especially when the pacers started to slow back down to stick to their set finish time. This is a best case scenario – that we helped you run a smart race for the first 2/3 so that you can take off and finish as fast as you want!

Aid Station Strategy: “Don’t rush, drink enough”

We will briskly walk for 20-30 seconds through the first 8-10 miles of aid stations to ensure that you get enough to prevent an empty ‘gas tank’. We’ll compensate by going 5 seconds per mile faster when running, but it’s an excellent trade off to keep you properly replenished.

Example of a Specific Kansas City Marathon terrain based ‘Smart Pace’ strategy

Example for a 2:00 Pacer

Mile	Terrain description	Effect on Pace for same effort	Total Changes to even pace	Split / Total Time	Ave. Pace/Total Time
1	Flat, gradual uphill over bridge	+ 5 seconds	+35 seconds	9:44 / 9:44	9:09 / 9:09
2	Gradual downhill, flat	-5 seconds	+10 seconds	9:19 / 19:03	9:09 / 18:18
3	Nearly flat with a small rise	none	none	9:09 / 28:12	9:09 / 27:27
4	Flat	none	-5 seconds	9:04 / 37:16	9:09 / 36:36
5	Flat, very gradual rise	none	-10 seconds	8:59 / 46:15	9:09 / 45:45
6	Gently rolling	none	-10 seconds	8:59 / 55:14	9:09 / 54:54
7	Gently rolling	none	-10 seconds	8:59 / 1:04:13	9:09 / 1:04:03
8	Gently rolling with one hill	+ 5 seconds	-5 seconds	9:04 / 1:13:17	9:09 / 1:13:12
9	Gently rolling	none	-10 seconds	8:59 / 1:22:16	9:09 / 1:22:21
10	Flat	none	-10 seconds	8:59 / 1:31:15	9:09 / 1:31:30
11	Gradual downhill	- 5 seconds	-10 seconds	8:59 / 1:40:14	9:09 / 1:40:39
12	Rolling with one small hill	+5 seconds	+10 seconds	9:19 / 1:49:33	9:09 / 1:49:48
13	Rolling with one small hill	none	+15 seconds	9:24 / 1:58:57	9:09 / 1:58:57
13.1	Flat	none	+2 seconds	1:02 / 1:59:59	1:00 / 1:59:57

Comments – As you can see, the pace depends on the terrain, factoring in the warm up at the beginning, settling into a strong rhythm in the middle, and hanging in there at the end. In using this strategy, a higher percentage of race participants will be able to stay with our marathon pacers into the latter stages of the half marathon.