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Performance Review by Jeff Galloway

At year's end, you can learn a lot from your running successes--and failures...

I once heard insanity defined as repeating the same process over and over while expecting a different outcome each time. That's an idea that easily applies to running. If you stubbornly forge ahead with the same program year after year, how can you expect better results?

On the other hand, you want to preserve those aspects of your training that are working well for you. The goal, then, is to fine-tune your running for the upcoming season. And the best way to do that is with a year-end review. What have you done right? Where can you use some improvement? How can you learn from your mistakes?

The good news: To begin, list your successes from the past 12 months. Write down any PRs or other milestones you reached, as well as the really fun runs - the relay, the lakeside trail run, the good times after a summer twilight run. What types of events would you like to do again and why? As early as possible, fill your calendar with similar runs that are coming up in the new year.

The bad news: We can learn from our failures as well as from our successes, so any disappointments deserve a close look. If you were injured, list the probable causes and the tactics you'll use to avoid getting hurt in the new year. Revisit the periods when you weren't enjoying your running and figure out why. If you didn't achieve a time goal, consider what might have gone wrong. List your top running "negatives" of the past year and plan to turn each one into a "positive."

Ask Yourself...

The following questions can help you evaluate the past year and establish new strategies for 2000:

Were my goals too high or too low?

If so: Next year, be more realistic. To avoid total frustration,, err on the side of easier goals, but keep them challenging. Also, helping a novice runner establish some goals can be a great way to hone your own goal-setting skills.

Did I often find myself bored or unmotivated to run?

If so: Start every run about two minutes per mile slower than normal. (Starting a run at full speed may make you feel tired and unmotivated to run next time.) Leave your watch at home for a while. Vow to cross-train one day a week. Temporarily cut back the number of miles you run each week.

Was I more injured or fatigued than I should have been?

If so: Build more rest into your schedule and cut back on your speedwork, racing or both. For one week each month, cut your normal mileage in half. (Note: If you had more than one injury this year that set you back a week or two, that's too many injuries.)

Was my running flat--no peaks or valleys?

If so: Pick a couple of big events and build next year's racing schedule around them, using a complete training mix of long runs, hills, speedwork and tapering. But don't depend on time goals for all of your running satisfaction. Keep running fun!



Was I so busy I ran only once or twice a week?

If so: When you're loaded up with work and family commitments, running can seem like just another task on your "to do" list. Remind yourself (and others) that by running for 30 or 60 minutes, in essence you create time by being more energized and clear-headed. Schedule three core weekly runs in your appointment book and then stick to them.

To feel fulfilled by running, as in other areas of life, we must experience regular challenges and rewards, and keep finding new ones. After four decades of these year-end reviews, I still discover fresh ways to enjoy our sport. Here's to a new year of great running!

Five Goals for the New Year

As thousands of runners have told me, nothing motivates them as much as having a goal. Here are five great ones:

- 1. Finish a marathon.** The granddaddy of running goals. Even a total beginner can finish one after just six to eight months of training.
- 2. Take a trip.** Plan a vacation around a big race you've never run before.
- 3. Lend your wisdom.** Coach another runner to a faster time, or a first 5K, half-marathon or marathon.
- 4. Recruit a friend.** Persuade an inactive friend or family member to take up running.
- 5. Get it in writing.** Keep a running diary, so next year's review will be easier than this year's!

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