

## Breaking down the Mile

### The start/1<sup>st</sup> lap

At the starting line it may feel for a moment like your legs and body won't go, but they will respond. The first lap is lost in a flash of adrenaline. Watch the cut! The technical rule is a one-stride lead, the real life rule is "everyone for themselves", so watch yourself and others. They will call for a restart if anyone falls in the first 100m. The first lap is fast and scary, with no pain or serious effort being expended. This lap is a process of burning off adrenaline and pent-up energy; no one has ever won a mile race in the first lap, but many have lost it by pushing too hard.

Things to focus on:

- The Start:
  - Proper positioning
  - Correct foot forward at starting line
  - Mentally prepared
  - Warmed-up
  - Don't anticipate the gun
- The cut line:
  - Be gradual
  - Defend yourself within the confines of the rules
  - DON'T just fall to the back of the pack
- Watch for others of your ability
- Be aggressive – but be in your limits!

### 2<sup>nd</sup> Lap

Whether a psychological or not, the second lap almost always hits the runners, either as they cross the starting line or around the curve. At this point the carefully nurtured mental toughness, tempered by hours of tough running, will allow you to endure the shock to your system with ease and you will continue to race on. You could be the best-conditioned athlete in the world, but if your mind is not ready to accept the possible numbing wave, then you may fall off the pace. By the time you are on the backstretch you really need to be focusing on pace. The general rule for this lap is very simple: COVER TERRITORY. No one ever won a race in the second lap-but plenty of people lost them there.

Things to focus on:

- Cover territory: go into your floating stride
- Focus on pace
- Be alert to others: where, who and what are they doing?
- Watch for the box-but don't panic
- Know your split and your pace
- Move around and pass those that are slowing down

### 3<sup>rd</sup> Lap

Here the real race begins, it is a time for the most intense concentration, the iciest of resolve. It is here the leader might balk at the pain and allow the pace to lag, here that positions among the runners shift; Those whose conditioning was not complete will fall to the back of the pack to hang on, the kickers move up like vultures to their vantage points at the shoulders of the front runners. Every miler knows that it is not the first lap but the third that is the farthest from the finish line. **Races are won (or lost) here**, records broken or forfeited to history, careers made or ended. The third lap has to be endured and endured and endured. No matter how bad it is, you can't let it lag here, whatever the cost.

Things to focus on:

- Staying mentally **TOUGH**
- Run harder than the previous laps (it still will be your slowest lap)
- Breakout of a box
- PASS and move up in the pack
- Get in position for the last lap
- Toughness, Toughness, Toughness
- Believe in your heart that all the hard work of the season will pull you through

### Gun/Bell Lap

With a quarter mile to go everybody becomes competitive athlete again. The competitors begin to look around and sizing up the situation. Here you need to lean a little bit into your stride and even through the numbing haze you feel taking hold of your body, feel pride in your strength. Everybody has ambitions in the last lap. No one ever ran down the backstretch of the gun lap with the leaders without believing they have a shot at it all. On this positioning and repositioning, and then finally the kicks, one by one or all at once the competitors will blast away for the finish line. Coming off the final curve it will be all over but the shouting; You will have to fight the inclination to lean back, fight to keep the integrity of your stride, not let overeager limbs failing around trying to get more speed, just run your best stride, like you have trained miles and miles to do, and don't let up until the line is past you! The die is cast here, and no praying or cheering or whimpering will change that. The matter in a sense was settled long ago, weeks, months, or years before, there were settled on the training fields, on the distance runs, on morning runs. Other than focusing on maintaining and leaning at the tape, there is not much you can do about it. Heart has nothing to do with it. In the final straightaway, *everyone* has heart.

Things to focus on:

- Positioning is everything
- Start your kick early and GO
- Stay smooth and don't over exaggerate
- You will run faster by maintaining form than quicker turn over and flailing arms
- Be ready to go when others go
- Don't be afraid to go outside on the corner
- Run hard all the way to the finish and BEYOND the line
- Lean at the line
- GO! GO! GO!