

Dealing with Disappointment, re-write from *'Running Journal'* by Richard Ferguson (Oct. 2008)

All of us, at times, feel disappointment in our busy lives. Our running isn't exempt from delivering its share of disappointment along with those exhilarating running experiences. We put in months of hard training only to be forced to drop an event because of injury; the week of the important race we contract a bad cold; we prepare well and then have a bad race for no apparent reason; we miss qualifying for Boston by less than a minute; for months we have an injury that just won't go away. No question, running disappointments happen and they hurt to the core!

When disappointments occur in our running we feel down, confused and sometimes guilty, thinking things would have been different if we had only done so and so with our training or pace. Disappointments will slowly fade, and believe it or not, disappointing experiences can be valuable in making us better runners, better competitors and better people. The KEY is to use the disappointment in a positive manner and not allow it to drag us down week after week.

When we don't reach our running goals it's usually not due to the lack of effort. It's very rare that runners try to have bad races or hope to feel bad during the event. Certainly we don't intentionally try to get injured at the most inopportune time or get sick the week of an important race. Illness, injury and bad days are just part of the life of athletes. Setbacks in running are usually the result of certain circumstances coming together at a specific (bad) time. Getting a bad cold during your training period is just a nuisance but contracting the cold the week of your race can be a major problem. Sure, it's bad luck, but it's also an opportunity to learn to deal with challenges, both from a physical and mental perspective. Cut to the chase... learn to work on the things you can control and don't worry about the things you can't control.

By focusing on our disappointments we waste a lot of valuable physical and mental energy. A lot of training is about managing our finite supply of energy. By dwelling on our failure(s) we waste loads of energy on negative emotions... energy that would be more wisely spent on preparation for future races. Again, the past has happened and we need to learn to let go of the negative and concentrate on the future with excitement and enthusiasm.

Disappointment will test our resolve and coping abilities. This is true to running also ... testing our resolve and coping with discomfort, heat, cold, wind, etc. This 'learning to cope' helps us become better runners. Disappointment shouldn't mean hopelessness; disappointment should mean learning about us as people and gaining confidence in coping with challenging events in our lives.

Running is full on peaks and valleys. We all have some really bad days, a lot of average days and a few really good days. In general life happens. To think that disappointment won't come into your running is simply irrational. Running is all about dealing with challenges. The better we are at adapting to the challenges, presented to us, the closer we will run to our potentials and the more enjoyment we will get from running.

It really helps to talk out our disappointments with our coach, fellow runners or close friends. The simple act of expressing disappointment verbally can be a valuable form of catharsis and nothing can help to ease those troubled feelings like knowing there are others who truly understand our disappointment. "That which does not kill me only serves to make me stronger".

Run safe and train smart!

Coach Cliff

