

Run7on7 Talks Running with Olympic Coach Keith Brantly

R7O7: I'm thinking about training for a half marathon this year to help me lose weight. I haven't worked out in six to eight months and I'm not much of a runner. How should I begin?

KB: Start with baby steps. Make a plan to run and walk 20 minutes three times per week. Start out with two minutes of walking and one minute of running for the first week. Then each week, reduce the walking time by 30 seconds until you are running 20 minutes continually.

R7O7: When it comes to running shoes – do you really get what you pay for? I see a lot of running shoes on the market over \$100. As a novice runner, would I even notice the difference between a discounted running shoe versus a high-performance one over \$100?

KB: You might. Everyone has different needs for running shoes. Some runners are prone to foot problems. Always visit your local running specialty shoe retailer where the staff is usually trained to analyze basic foot strike and anatomy. They can fit you in the shoe that best fits your running goals, foot anatomy and budget.

R7O7: Is it okay to listen to music while you run? I don't think I could complete a mile without my music. I hear a lot of real runners say they don't – so is it bad for you or just personal preference?

KB: It's personal preference, but there are dangers associated with listening to music while running as it can distract you from your surroundings.

R7O7: Sometimes I zone out and my mind takes me away from running, is that okay or should I try to stay focused on each step?

KB: It's okay to zone out on easy runs. However, when trying to practice for pace or running interval workouts you need to be aware of your pace over the ground, effort level and mechanics.

R7O7: Some people say it's more important to stretch after a long run than before. Is that true?

KB: I believe in stretching before and after a long run in equal amounts.

R7O7: Will training on inclines improve my long distance stamina? My speed?

KB: Training on inclines won't improve your long distance stamina or speed, but it is a component of stamina. Running inclines and declines help build the leg strength necessary to carry your body more efficiently for a longer periods of time.

R7O7: I'm going to be running a marathon this season and wanted to know if it's true that you're supposed to eat a lot of carbs, like pasta, the night before?

KB: Yes, it is true, but don't over do it; it's best to eat several high carb meals during the day rather than trying to stuff yourself with one big meal. Also, be sure to eat foods your stomach can tolerate. It's just as important to drink plenty of fluids the day before...but again...don't over hydrate.

R7O7: What's the best thing for shin splints?

KB: Rest, new shoes and a softer running surface will help.

R7O7: I see a lot of runners using heart rate monitors, fancy watches and GPS devices to track their progress online. When do all these gadgets become necessary? I just want to lose weight and stay in shape, I'm not out to win a medal.

KB: The most basic tool of course is the running watch, however, the heart rate monitors are a fantastic way to maximize your training efforts objectively. If you know your routes, GPS is a little bit of overkill, but I enjoy the accuracy of both a GPS and a heart rate monitor.

R7O7: How much money can a professional marathon runner make in a given year? And at 32, is there still time to become a professional marathon runner even though I haven't run one marathon?

KB: A runner ranked among the top five Americans in the marathon could make about \$50k–\$70K in prize money in one year before sponsorships. There's always hope for someone in their 30's to run well. I didn't make an Olympic team until I was 34 and I only began running marathons at age 27.