

A WINNING MINDSET

In Chapter 8 of my book, **Coach, Run, Win**, I tell the story of how I and my runners developed a winning mindset. It is actually quite simple in theory. Make a decision to be the best that you can be, figure out the workouts necessary to help you reach your goals and then execute those workouts. You will not win your age group in a local 5k unless you have decided that you can. Your team will not be League Champions unless you have decided that you will. Once a decision has been made and goals have been set, perform the workouts that will allow you to achieve those goals.

Hoping to be better will not make you better. Wishing you could win will not make you a winner. Committing to the work and focus necessary to achieve your goals will bring you success.

We often limit ourselves with a fear of failure. The result of this fear is that we limit our goals. What is the worst that can happen if you reach high and fall short? At least you tried. So try to be the best.

BUILDING CONFIDENCE FOR RACE DAY

The most important thing in the mental race is confidence. Confidence comes from positivity: positive self-image and positive thoughts about workouts, teammates, coaches, family, and friends. Everyone has doubts and negative thoughts. It is, however, what you choose to do with those thoughts that matters. I would never tell athletes that a workout was easy. The term *easy* was not used in our program. Runners need to be proud of themselves and gain confidence that comes from the knowledge of completing something difficult and doing it well, despite how hard it was.

All of us have a little, critical version of ourselves, sitting on our shoulders during races. This little self tells us we are going too fast. It challenges our sanity. It demands that we slow down. It ridicules us for thinking we can race at such a pace. The voice is negative and demeaning and critical. Now here is the key: Do not ignore that voice. Instead, have an answer ready. The secret is to respond with positive facts, such as, “I have done the workouts to be able to go this fast . . . I have trained for this goal . . . I have prepared for this challenge, for this race, for these competitors.” Make sure you have an answer that emphasizes positive and fact-based responses to dismantle that negative voice.

For more on the mental aspects of racing see Chapter 5 of **Coach, Run, Win**, which includes some proven techniques for implementing the approach described above.