

## Ep #218: 3 Steps to Your Best Race Ever



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Jill Angie**

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Welcome to *The Not Your Average Runner Podcast*. If you're a woman who has never felt athletic but you still dream about becoming a runner, you are in the right place. I'm Jill Angie, a certified running and life coach, and I teach women how to start running, feel confident, and change their lives. And now I want to help you.

Hey Rebels, how are you? I am still glowing from the amazingly fun time that we had at Ragnar Wisconsin two weeks ago. It was so freaking fun. And I promise I'm going to have an episode in a couple weeks with all the fun stories and you can hear it directly from folks who were there. It's going to be amazing.

But right now I have got something else to talk about, and it's fun. This is a fun episode, it's all about race planning. And I'm kind of excited that it's just you and me here because I feel like we haven't had a lot of time together without other people around. So I'm glad that it's just you and me here talking about one of my favorite topics, which is planning for your best race ever.

Now, there is a lot that goes into preparing for a race. It's not just pick a race, pick a training plan and then start running. There's a whole lot more. And I think a lot of folks are like, "Okay, my race is in 12 weeks so I'll just find a 12 week plan and I'll follow it and everything will be great."

And then what happens is something doesn't go right and then everything kind of falls apart and you feel really bummed and discouraged and you basically decide that you're never going to be a real runner. Sound familiar?

This is pretty much my first half marathon to a T. So I want to help you avoid that trap so today we're going to go over the three things you need to do to make sure that your race is a total success. You ready? Okay.

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So, step one is do your pace research before you sign up for your race. You're going to do your pace research. And what I mean by this is you're going to start by checking to see if there's a time limit. And if there is, do the math. Does that mean that you're going to be pulled off the course if you don't make it?

Does it just mean that there's going to be no course support and you'll be running the course but you won't have the tables every few miles with Gatorade and water and so forth? Are they going to open the roads and you're going to have to finish on the sidewalks? Do your research and understand what that means.

There's a big difference between those three options. So most races do have a time limit, not all, but the majority of them have a time limit. And what that means is that if you are coming in after that time limit there may be minor consequences, there may be major consequences. The biggest consequence is that they'll pull you off the course if you haven't made it to a certain mile by a certain time.

Disney is sort of the big example of this, for half and full marathons they're very strict and they will pull you off the course. They have these people called balloon ladies, it's like the weirdest name ever. But they're women that walk at the very back of the pack, they're bringing up the rear and they've got balloons and you can see them. And so you can turn around and see how close you are to the balloon ladies.

So Disney is pretty strict about that, there are a couple other races that are pretty strict about that. But most races won't actually pull you off the course if you're not going to finish within the certain time. But you've got to know this. You have to read the rules on the race website and be really clear and understand exactly what happens if you don't finish in time.

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So, assuming that they're not going to pull you off the course, most races will actually let you finish. And they will leave that finish line up until everybody has crossed it. Not all races do that, but most of them do.

Now what happens though, is they'll guarantee that the finish line will be fully staffed, that there will be course support, that all the things will still be in place to a certain point in time. And then after that you might sort of be finishing on your own. You might have to get up on the sidewalk because they might be reopening the roads.

This is actually the most common thing, is that roads are going to be reopened after a certain point. And so you can continue on the race, they're happy to have you do it. There will still be a finish line but you're going to be on the sidewalk or sharing the road with cars. So that's the most common thing.

Sometimes they will start taking down the aid stations. So if you know that that's going to happen, and they'll usually explain that on the website. If you know that that's going to happen, you just want to plan accordingly and make sure that you bring some extra water. That's it.

So if there's a time limit and the race site doesn't explicitly state what happens if you take longer than that, you're going to go to the race results from prior years and see how many people actually finished after the time limit. So you should be able to look at, maybe not last year's, because last year was 2020 and we had no races last year.

But you should be able to go to prior years and just kind of look and say, "All right, well, there were 2,000 people in this race and 100 people finished after the cutoff time." Okay, yeah, that's actually a good indicator that they're going to leave the course open. And a lot of times, they'll actually tell you, you have to finish by a certain time knowing that people are going to take longer than that and it's going to be okay.

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So do your research, talk to people that have done the race before and find out exactly what the situation is. Because I don't want you to look at a race and you're thinking, "Oh, this is my dream race. I totally want to do this race. But oh my gosh, there's a three and a half hour cut off for this half marathon. And I don't think I can finish in that time. Oh, it's not the race for me."

I want to make sure that you don't go through that unless you absolutely have to. Because I think the first few half marathons that I did were the Philly half marathon, I did it a few times in a row. And they state, I think it's a 15 minute mile or a 16 minute mile that you have to keep up. But they don't really enforce it. And so I learned that the first time I actually ran that race, I was doing about a 13 minute mile so I wasn't really too worried about it.

But there was one year that I did it that I thought, "Oh, gosh." But what I found out was they keep the finish line open because they know that there's going to be people who sign up and then maybe they get injured, or they turn their leg or their ankle, or they pull a muscle, or they get sick, and they're still going to want to finish and it's going to take them longer than the time limit.

So I want to make sure that if you see a time limit that scares you, it's okay. It doesn't mean the race is a no, it means you need to do a little more research. So, again, if you're slower than the time limit, it doesn't necessarily mean that you shouldn't sign up.

But here's something that a lot of runners make this mistake, that they say, "Well, I've got 12 weeks, or I've got four months, I'll just do a lot of speed work to make myself faster." So not only do they put pressure on themselves to train for the distance, they put pressure on themselves to get faster at the same time. And that's really not a great combination of things.

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I mean, first of all, if you're just a smidge slower, like say it's a half marathon, they've got a three hour cut off. And right now you can do a 5K in 40 minutes. Now, a 5K in 40 minutes will translate on race day, as you kind of correct for the additional distance and time, that'll translate to about a three hour and four minute half marathon. Just a little tiny bit longer.

And that means that you probably can work on your pace and take 15 seconds off of your mile time so that you can finish in under three hours. So if you're just a smidgen slower than their mile pace, I'd say you actually can probably make that up on race day.

But if right now you're running maybe a 45 or a 50 minute 5K and you're thinking like I want to sign up for this three hour half marathon in 12 or 16 weeks and I'm just going to train real hard to get faster. Honey, not going to happen. I mean, I don't want to say it's completely impossible because I don't think there's anything in this world that is totally impossible.

But I think it's highly unlikely that you can drop your time because that's going to be like a couple minutes per mile. I think it's highly unlikely that you can drop that time enough in the 12 or 16 week training plan to come in under the time limit.

So the key here is to be very realistic in advance and say, "Hey, I want to do this race. It's pretty likely I'm going to finish past the time limit. Do I want to have that experience anyway? Or do I want to say no, I'm going to find a different race?" Either response is fine. I just want you to go into your race really understanding what you're signing up for, and not putting expectations on yourself that are going to set you up to feel kind of shitty.

Because so many people come to me and they say, "Hey, I just signed up for a half marathon. It's six months away. How do I take three minutes off my mile time between now and then?" And I'm like, "Uh, we need to talk."

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So, all that being said, I want to make sure that you understand that there is absolutely zero shame coming in after that time limit, after they've taken down the course support. Hell, even after the finish line has come down, there's no shame in that. Because you finish that motherfucker. I want you to be so freaking proud of that.

So doing your pace research is not about scaring you away from doing a race that you want to do. It's about managing your expectations, thinking it through in advance so that you can have an awesome day. Okay.

Now, there's a great resource over at Sport Tracks that will actually help you take your current 5K pace, you put it into this little form and then it'll tell you "Okay, based on how fast it takes you to run a 5K, this is what you can expect for a 10K, a half, a full marathon." So check out the show notes for the link because we are going to share that with you. It's a really, really great resource.

All right, so step one, do your pace research and think it through. It's going to help you so much to enjoy your race day. Now, step two is actually my favorite part. This is where we just get busy and have some fun. This is where you start planning your actual training. The actual things you're going to be doing and figuring out what the next few months are going to look like for you.

So you're going to have to assemble some things for this step. And if you're listening to this right now, just listen all the way through, and then you can come back to the show notes and write down everything that you need.

So you're going to need your training plan, you're going to need your calendar. You're also going to need a pack of post-it notes in three different colors, or three little packets of post-it notes, three different colors. You're going to need a sharpie or some other kind of marker. A couple of big pieces of poster board or a fairly good sized blank space on a wall.

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You're also going to want your favorite running playlist with all of your best like pump me up songs. You're going to want your favorite running outfit, the one that makes you feel completely and totally badass. And then some glue or tape. And finally, a printout of the race map. You can usually get that from the website, maybe even the elevation map, and then cut out some pictures or quotes that inspire you.

All right, so that's what you're going to need for this next step. And here's what's going to happen, the first thing you're going to do is you're going to put on that running outfit and crank up that playlist. Block out maybe an hour to an hour and a half for this because you're going to have some fun.

So you're going to get out that training plan, and you can either have it on your phone, or have it on your tablet, or you can print it out, whatever you need to do. Count out how many runs you need to do, including race day. So include race day in the count. And get that many post-its of color number one, and then put them aside.

Then you're going to count how many strength training workouts you'll be doing during your training, and spoiler alert, I recommend twice a week. But whatever your plan is, count out the number of workouts throughout the entire training process, get that many post-it notes out from color number two.

And then finally, I want you to think about cross training. Are you going to do yoga? Are you going to swim? Are you going to bike? Is there anything you're going to fit into your plan that you're thinking ahead like, "Okay, will I do yoga once a week," or whatever it is, anything that's not running or strength training. All right, count up the number of workouts that you're going to do, and then you guessed it, get out that many post-its from color number three.



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So you should have three little piles of post it notes and all of your other stuff. And you're like taking dance breaks, you're having some fun. And now we're going to make your master race planning board. Okay, so I want you to take your poster boards and tape them together into one big piece of poster board. Or if you just want to use an empty wall, that's totally fine. I've done that in the past as well.

So you're going to maybe do this on the kitchen table or get it on the floor and keep your pets out of the room. If your pets are like mine, they'll be all up in your business, your kids too. Give yourself some uninterrupted space to work.

And take that race map printout, any pictures or quotes that you found, maybe the elevation printout and kind of arrange them. I like to sprinkle them throughout, but maybe put the race map print out in the middle and some pictures and quotes around the edges. And just kind of like place them there.

Make sure that you're leaving room for all of your post-it notes, because you're going to put those on there individually as well. So I probably should have mentioned earlier, you might want to use the small post-its, not the square ones. But use the ones that are like an inch by two inches, they're on the smaller side.

Okay, so you're going to take your race map and kind of arrange it, make sure that there's room for all the post-its. And make sure that it's pleasing to your eye. And then you're going to take all of the post-its as well and arrange them.

Now, if you're like me, you're probably like, "I need to arrange them in numerical order, in color order, in rows and stuff." So if you want to do it that way, that's fine. If you're somebody that's more of a super creative type and you want to put them in all different orders and different directions,

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totally fine. You do you, whatever you want. But you get all of those post-its on there and get all of your other decorations.

And once you're happy with the arrangement, you're going to tape or glue down just the map, and the photos, and the quote cutouts. The post-its are just going to stick on there under their own power. We're not going to glue them or tape them down. Okay, so when you've got that all done, I want you to take another dance break, stop and party.

And now that you've got everything situated you're going to take that Sharpie and start writing your runs and your other workouts on the post-it notes, one per post it. And I like to number them, it's just how I am. So I'll be like, "Run number one, three miles. Run number two, 45 minutes of hills. Run number three, four miles," and so on.

Now, you're going to fill out all those post-its. So you've got all of your runs, all of your strength and everything, you've got a little post-it for every individual workout. And this is where it gets super fun because every time you finish a workout, you get to pull a post-it off the board. Oh my God, it's so fun.

So the goal is to end up— Well there's two possible goals. One goal is I want to end up with a blank board, or pretty close to it. Because for sure there's going to be some workouts you miss. That's okay, totally normal, don't beat yourself up. But for the ones that you complete, you're either going to pull it off and have a blank spot on the board. And then you're gonna have a mostly blank board at the end.

Or this is where you can get bonus points, I suggest you either print out maybe a selfie that you took on that run or during that workout, or a picture that you took of something else, or maybe even a screenshot of your stats. Cut that out, print it out, cut it out, and then stick that on the board where the post-it was so that you're looking at this board when you're done and

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you can see all of the evidence of every single training run you did. Photos of where you were or your stats, all that fun stuff.

I promise you this is a really, really fulfilling activity to do. And it's something that as you work through your training plan, whether it's 12 weeks or 16 weeks, you can see your whole race board evolve. And you might even turn it into a memory at the end where you take your race medal and maybe your race t-shirt and make some artwork out of it.

But really the goal here is to give you a visual tracker and some visual motivation and some visual inspiration that keeps you engaged and excited throughout the whole process. And then at the end you have a whole beautiful memory of everything that you did.

Now, the final thing, and this is actually a super important part. It has nothing to do with the board, but you're going to want to look at that training plan and make sure every single run and supporting workout is entered into your calendar, not just on a post-it note on the wall. That's the fun part, that's the visual part. You got to put that shit in your calendar in your schedule ahead of time so that it's an appointment with yourself.

And now, yes, there's going to be weeks where you have to rearrange them. I mean that's a given, right? That's not a problem, you can do that to accommodate your schedule. But I want you to put them in there now with target dates and times for every single one. And then you can rearrange as you need.

For me, I'll put all my workouts in for an entire training cycle. And then at the beginning of every week I kind of look at that week in detail and say, "Okay, do I need to switch anything up or can I stick with this?" But this keeps me from scheduling day trips to New York City on the same day that I have like a 10 mile run scheduled.

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It helps me plan my schedule so that I know roughly what I'm going to be doing and roughly when I'm going to be doing it. And then I can plan my social schedule, my work schedule and everything around that. All right, so block out the time now so there's fewer surprises later on. Got to set yourself up for success, right?

Okay, so the third step to this whole planning process is to start planning your thinking. And this is the thing that most people forget because they get really excited about making a vision board, and putting the training runs in their calendar, because it gives you like that little hit of dopamine. But what most of us fall short on is planning our thinking in advance.

So what thoughts are going to get in your way over the next 12 or 16 weeks? What do you do if you get off track? What do you want to think and feel during your training and on race day? This is so fucking important, y'all. Because there's going to be a lot of days when you're just not feeling it, where you're tired and you would rather go to brunch than do a five mile training run.

And what's going to happen is you're going to have this thought, you're going to be like, "I don't want to do my training run today. I want to go to brunch with my girlfriend's or I want to go shopping, or I want to stay in bed or whatever." For me, it's always like, "Oh, I would much rather clean the kitchen pantry than go for my run."

So you're going to have this thought that you don't want to do what's on your plan. And then you'll think, "Oh shit, I lost my motivation. And now everything is going to suck." But my friend, it is so totally normal to not be in the mood to run, not be in the mood to lift heavy things or whatever. The problem is not that you have those thoughts. It's that you believe them. And it's that you're not prepared to counteract them when they come up.

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So this is great news, because it means that as part of your planning process, you're just going to anticipate all those thoughts and be prepared for them with thoughts that are going to help you stay motivated and committed.

So planning looks like this, you're going to grab a notebook, you're going to start writing down all the excuses or other obstacles that might come up. Like I'm going to be tired and not want to run. I'm going to be busy and think I don't have enough time. I'm going to feel overwhelmed. I'm going to feel anxious.

It's going to rain. It's going to be cold. I'm going to wake up and say I just don't feel like it. Or it's going to be hard. It's going to be physically uncomfortable. Or I'm going to be bored running around and around in my neighborhood.

So brainstorm the things that your brain is going to say to you to justify skipping a workout. And then I want you to add in some legit obstacles. Like you might get sick, your kid might get sick and you might have to stay home from your run to take care of him. Your boss might ask you to work late. You might get stuck in traffic. There's a million things that can come up that can potentially mess with your schedule.

So you're going to have this long list of things. Now for every single thing you wrote down, I want you to come up with an alternate thought for the excuses and a backup plan for the actual obstacles. And be honest with yourself.

It's raining outside, not an actual obstacle. I mean, maybe you need a backup plan of having a rain jacket, but otherwise it might rain on race day. So you're going to want to train in the rain so that on race day, you don't say, "Oh no, it's raining. I can't do my race."

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So come up with alternate thoughts for all your excuses and backup plans for your actual obstacles. And I'm sure there's going to be stuff that comes up that you didn't plan for. But the more planning you can do in advance, the easier it's going to be.

So, how are you going to handle obstacles that come up? How are you going to handle the thought, "I don't feel like it. I'm not motivated today"? What are you going to do when those things come up? Are you going to say, "Oh well, I'm just not feeling it today. I guess I'll wait till I'm excited again"? No, you're going to pull out the list of counter proposals and reframe your thinking.

And if your kiddo gets sick and you have to skip your run to stay home and take care of her, how are you going to make up the workout? Or here's another option, my friend, maybe you decide in advance that you get a set number of passes for things like that.

Okay, I know that there's going to be 10% of my workouts that I'm going to miss because I'm going to decide in advance that there's going to be times where I'm not going to make up a workout. I'm just going to say, all right, that one's gone. And I'm going to move on to the next one." So decide this kind of shit in advance.

Come up with your plan now so it's easier to put it in place when it happens. And once you have your plan for how you're going to deal with obstacles and excuses, you got that figured out so that when shit happens, you're prepared. The next thing you want to plan on is how you want to feel during all of your training runs and on your race day.

So decide the feeling you want to experience when you're running on race day and start practicing it during your training runs every damn time. If you want to feel proud on race day, start by thinking thoughts during training that make you feel proud. This works, my friends.

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When I was training for my second half marathon, I did this exact thing. Every single training run I focused on how proud I felt about what I was doing, how badass I felt, how great it felt to follow through on my commitments. I just focused so hard on those thoughts and feelings. And guess what? On race day it was easy breezy to bring those feelings back up.

Even when I hit mile nine and it started to feel real hard. My legs were super tired, my feet hurt. I was like, "Yeah, I'm tired. But I'm proud and I'm going to keep doing my thing because I know I can finish and I'm going to be so fucking happy about my effort today."

So your training runs aren't just for the physical training. Yes, it's important to get miles on your feet, for sure. But your training runs are also for training your brain. In fact, I think the brain training is even more important because you can power through feeling tired and sore, you really can. But if your mind starts to jump over into sort of negative territory, it's so much harder to keep your body moving.

So you got to train your brain along with your body. Practice the distance. Practice your fueling. Practice your hydration. And practice your thinking. Use those thoughts while you're actually training so that they come a lot more easily on race day.

So grab a journal and write it all out. Everything you want to be thinking and saying to yourself during your race. Visualize all of it in advance and then practice that shit on your training runs and see how much easier your race day will become. Okay?

All right, my rebellious friends. That is it for today. I love you. Stay safe, get your ass out there and run and I will talk to you next week.



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Oh, and one last thing, if you enjoyed listening to this episode you have to check out the Rebel Runner Roadmap. It's a 30 day online program that will teach you exactly how to start running, stick with it, and become the runner you've always wanted to be. Head on over to [rebelrunnerroadmap.com](http://rebelrunnerroadmap.com) to join. I'd love to be a part of your journey.