Hospital Hill Run SmartPace Strategy

Fact #1: The body needs to warm up for at least 2 miles. During that time, it goes from an inefficient fuel burning (converting oxygen, sugar/fat, electrolytes to energy) and waste removal (getting rid of lactic acid and built up heat) machine to a more efficient one. The warmer it gets above 60 degrees, the more essential it becomes to avoid overheating, or producing more heat than the body can release – otherwise, your body will shut you down until you recover that balance.

If someone pushes it too hard (even doing even pace) in that time period, they will use up an inordinate amount of stored glycogen while accumulating an inordinate amount of lactic acid & hydrogen ions to set up an extra amount of fatigue and 'heavy legs' for the final few miles of the half marathon. In warm weather, they'll accumulate an exponential amount of heat which puts them at a high risk to overheat and be forced to slow down involuntarily until they release this excessive heat.

We are in the business of preparing our participants for the last 1/3 in a more intelligent and effective manner, so we'll EASE into the half marathon. With a long gradual hill at mile 1 and the toughest hill in the 2nd half of mile 2, it only will exacerbate this situation for anyone determined to set an even pace from the get-go. Besides, we'd be wise to save a little bit for the long uphills at mile 5 and 10. By not respecting the terrain and the body's need to warm up, we'll end up like most other pace teams in races around the country – having little to no one to pace in the final miles since we innocently wasted them in the first 1/3 of the half marathon.

Fact #2: Honor the Domino Effect. Imagine 13 dominos lined up. Which domino has the greatest impact? The first one, right? In the same manner, the first mile is the most crucial, make-or-break mile of the half marathon. Therefore, you need to be the most conservative with this one. Vice versa, the last mile is the least critical so you can afford to be the most aggressive on that one. But, what do most people do? The opposite!

Just like the first mile, the first aid station is the most important, make-or-break aid station to determine how well people can keep their 'gas tank' from going on empty while the last aid station is the least important towards overall race performance. Again, what do most people do? They rush through the first ones until they're forced to walk through the last ones. We'll encourage you to get what you need in the first 9 miles of aid stations if you want to have any hope of getting what you want in the last 4.1 miles. And, it begins most importantly with the first aid station.

Fact #3: Uphills take more out of you than you realize. Going up a hill is like going from running at your normal weight to adding 20-40 pounds of extra weight. While people do slow down on an uphill, they try to push the pace too hard in an effort to not lose too much time. The tradeoff in doing this is not worth it as they create too much metabolic waste and heat which creates a mess the body has to deal with and leads to extra fatigue from that point on. It makes much more sense to maintain an even effort and give in on the uphills while doing your best to make up the lost time on the downhill. When gravity goes from being your worst enemy (on uphills) to your best friend (on downhills), you can afford to be more aggressive and not suffer any real consequences. By easing up on the ups, you'll have more energy to go faster on the downs, so become a downhill specialist with a greater respect for uphills. Our pacers will make up time on all the downhills by taking it easier on the uphills.

In summary, by avoiding the 3 most common mistakes people make in a race - starting out too fast, rushing through the early aid stations, and pushing too hard on the uphills (especially in the early going) – we'll start smart to set you up for a great race!

Pacing Strategy: "Hold back, settle into a strong rhythm, and hang in there."
Hold back – We'll run the first mile about 30 seconds per mile slower than the average pace of your goal time to properly warm up. We'll run the second mile at an effort that is 10-15 seconds per mile slower than the average pace of your goal time to continue the transition from warm up to settling in (the 2 hills will add about 15 seconds to the actual pace). Finally, we'll run the 3rd mile at the average pace effort of your goal time to complete the transition (again, the uphill will add 10 seconds to the actual pace).

Settle into a strong, but doable rhythm – Then, we'll go 5-10 seconds faster per mile than the average goal time pace to get back the time we gave at the beginning – the terrain will cause the actual pace to vary for each mile.
Hang in there – We'll give lots of encouragement to you at this time, but know that you can go 10-15 seconds slower than what you've been averaging. Our job is to set the actual pace so even if participants lose contact, we may get 1 or 2 that pick it up in the final mile to finish with us. If they do, they'll want to know they ran at least 1 second faster than their goal time (i.e. a 1:59:59 for the 2:00 group).

*But, finish strong if you feel good! We have found that many of the runners in our pace teams feel good and pick it up to leave the pacers behind in the final downhill mile, especially when the pacers focus on sticking to their set finish time. This is a best case scenario – that we helped you run a smart race so that you can take off and finish as fast as you want! Take full advantage of gravity on the final 7/10 mile downhill!

***The Run/Walk Strategy** – Former Olympian Coach Jeff Galloway has helped many thousands of runners to faster times by utilizing the run/walk method. In its various uses, you can run a mile, walk a minute or walk a minute after every 3 to 5 minutes of running. He advocates this for at least the first 2/3 of the race. From firsthand experience, I was amazed to be able to help a few people achieve PR's while pacing a group of 10 Runners' Edge participants to finish in 2 hours at Hospital Hill in 2001. We simply wanted to practice using the 'run a mile/walk a minute' strategy before heading to Duluth, MN for the Grandma's Marathon 2 weeks later. Needless to say, I became a believer after that.

On a warm day, short, brisk walking breaks aren't much slower than your running pace – they give your running muscles a break while allowing you to release built up heat, so the warmer the day, the more useful it becomes. You simply compensate by going a little faster while running (add 5 seconds for every 30 seconds of walking). For our course, the smart run/walk approach would be to walk through the aid stations to ensure you get enough fluids as well as in the middle of big hills to provide a mini-break. Any other run/walk breaks can be dispersed evenly throughout the course. Of course, take advantage of gravity and run all the downhill portions. Most of our pacers will utilize at least some version of the Run/Walk method.

Aid Station Strategy: "Don't rush, drink enough"
Depending on the pacer, they'll briskly walk for 10-60 seconds through the first 10 miles of aid stations to ensure that you get enough to prevent an empty 'gas tank'. We'll compensate by going 5-10 seconds

per mile faster when running, but it's an excellent trade off to keep you properly replenished while releasing any built up heat.

Hospital Hill Run Pacing Strategy

Example for a 2:00 Pacer

Mile	Terrain description	Smart Pace Strategy	Terrain Effect on Pace for same effort	Total Changes to pace	Split / Total Time	Average Pace / Total Time
1	Flat, gradual down & up	+30 seconds	-5 seconds	+25 seconds	9:34 / 9:34	9:09 / 9:09
2	Gradual down, 2 uphills	+15 seconds	+15 seconds	+30 seconds	9:39 / 19:13	9:09 / 18:18
3	Uphill, then flat	0	+5 seconds	+5 seconds	9:14 / 28:27	9:09 / 27:27
4	Flat, big downhill	-5 seconds	-20 seconds	-25 seconds	8:44 / 37:11	9:09 / 36:36
5	Flat, uphill, downhill	-10 seconds	none	-10 seconds	8:59 / 46:10	9:09 / 45:45
6	Uphill, rolling	-10 seconds	+20 seconds	+10 seconds	9:19 / 55:29	9:09 / 54:54
7	Gently rolling, downhill	-5 seconds	- 5 seconds	-10 seconds	8:59 / 1:04:28	9:09 / 1:04:03
8	Gently rolling, one hill	-5 seconds	+15 seconds	+10 seconds	9:19 / 1:13:47	9:09 / 1:13:12
9	Gradual downhill	-5 seconds	-10 seconds	-15 seconds	8:54 / 1:22:41	9:09 / 1:22:21
10	Gradual downhill, flat	-5 seconds	-5 seconds	-10 seconds	8:59 / 1:31:40	9:09 / 1:31:30
11	Flat, uphill	0	+20 seconds	+20 seconds	9:29 / 1:41:09	9:09 / 1:40:39
12	Gently rolling	0	-1 second	-1 second	9:08 / 1:50:17	9:10 / 1:49:49
13	Short uphill, big downhill	0	-25 seconds	-25 seconds	8:44 / 1:59:01	9:10 / 1:58:59
13.1	Gradual downhill	-1 second	-4 seconds	-5 seconds	:58 / 1:59:59	1:01 / 2:00:00

Comments – As you can see, the pace depends on the terrain, factoring in the warm up at the beginning, settling into a strong rhythm in the middle, and hanging in there at the end. In using this strategy, a higher percentage of race participants will be able to stay with our pacers into the latter stages of the half marathon.