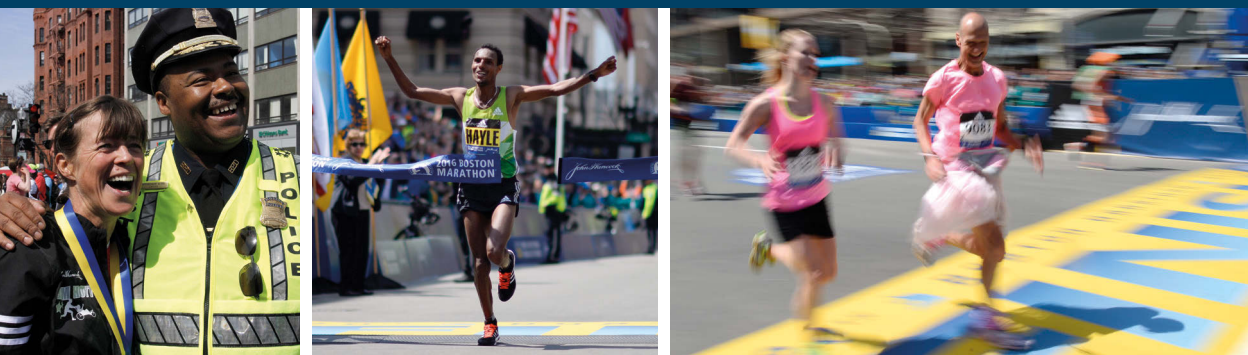


# BOSTON MARATHON

## HOW TO QUALIFY!



JEFF GALLOWAY

MEYER  
& MEYER  
SPORT

## Boston Marathon – How to Qualify!

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# Boston Marathon

## **How to Qualify!**

Jeff Galloway

Meyer & Meyer Sport

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data  
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Jeff Galloway  
**Boston Marathon – How to Qualify!**  
Maidenhead: Meyer & Meyer Sport (UK) Ltd., 2018  
ISBN 978-1-78255-807-1

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© 2018 Meyer & Meyer Sport (UK) Ltd.  
2nd Edition 2012, 3rd edition 2018  
Aachen, Auckland, Beirut, Cairo, Cape Town, Dubai, Högendorf, Hong Kong,  
Indianapolis, Manila, New Delhi, Singapore, Sydney, Tehran, Vienna  
Member of the World



Sport Publishers' Association (WSPA)  
[www.w-s-p-a.org](http://www.w-s-p-a.org)

ISBN 978-1-78255-807-1  
E-Mail: [info@m-m-sports.com](mailto:info@m-m-sports.com)  
[www.m-m-sports.com](http://www.m-m-sports.com)

# Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>The Power of Boston: Why Is the Boston Marathon the Greatest? .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>My All-Time Favorite Marathon: Sharing Boston 1996 With My Dad ..</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Six Steps to Qualifying for the Boston Marathon .....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>How to Choose the Right Course—Some are Faster .....</b>	<b>16</b>
	• Websites	
	• Pick 3 races in a row	
	• Races with the highest percentage of qualifiers	
<b>5</b>	<b>A Tour of the Boston Course With Bill Rodgers .....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>How to Qualify and Enter .....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>A Blending of Key Elements .....</b>	<b>26</b>
	• Set realistic goals each season	
	• How much improvement one can expect	
	• Use the “magic mile” time trial in this book to monitor improvement	
	• The long runs are the most important training component	
	• There must be significant rest between stress workouts	
	• Back off when your “gut instinct” tells you that you may be getting injured	
	• Cadence drills improve efficiency	
	• Acceleration-glidiers train the muscles to “shift gears”	
	• Hills build strength and improve performance	
<b>8</b>	<b>For Extra Credit .....</b>	<b>29</b>
	Workouts, compression sleeves, supplements, mental training, water running, heart monitors	
<b>9</b>	<b>Training Schedules: .....</b>	<b>31</b>
	Time goal 3:05 .....	32
	Time goal 3:10 .....	36
	Time goal 3:15 .....	40
	Time goal 3:25 .....	44
	Time goal 3:30 .....	48
	Time goal 3:35 .....	52
	Time goal 3:40 .....	56
	Time goal 3:45 .....	60
	Time goal 3:55 .....	64
	Time goal 4:00 .....	68
	Time goal 4:10 .....	72
	Time goal 4:25 .....	76
	Time goal 4:40 .....	80

Time goal 4:55.....84  
 Time goal 5:10.....88  
 Time goal 5:25.....92

**10 What If? .....97**

- Race weekend doesn't match up with the training plan
- If race day conditions are not right...
- Injury interruption
- Sickness interruption
- Career, vacation, family interruptions
- Cross training can keep you fit, if you must stop running

**11 The Galloway Run-Walk-Run Method..... 101**

"Walk breaks give you control over your training and your fatigue."

- Walk before you get tired
- A short and gentle walking stride
- No need to ever eliminate the walk breaks
- How to keep track of the walk breaks
- Strategies by pace per mile

**12 The "Magic Mile" Is Your Reality Check ..... 105**

- The best predictor of performance
- How to do the "MM"
- Galloway's Performance Predictor
- The "leap of faith" goal prediction—how much?

**13 Your Journal—The Best Planning and Evaluation Tool ..... 111**

- The planning process
- The data recording
- Morning pulse as a guide for overstress

**14 Form Improvement Drills—To Make Running Faster and Easier ..... 117**

**15 The Principles of Great Running Form ..... 121**

- I believe that running is an inertial activity
- Relaxed muscles
- The big three: posture, stride and bounce

**16 Hill Training Builds Strength—And More..... 127**

- The Hill Workout
- Hill Running Form
- Hill training strengthens lower legs and improves running form
- Running faster on hills in races
- Downhill form
- Biggest mistakes: too long a stride, bouncing too much

- 17 Speed Training Prepares You for Top Performance ..... 131**
- Gradually pushing up the workload
  - Stress + Rest = Improvement
  - Introducing the body to speed through “drills”
  - A gentle increase in your weekly workouts causes a slight breakdown
  - The damage
  - Beware of junk miles
  - Speed training gets you into the anaerobic zone: producing an oxygen debt
  - The anaerobic threshold
  - The talk test—how aerobic are you?
  - Fast Twitch vs. Slow Twitch Muscle Fibers
  - Are you working too hard toward a time goal?
  - The personal growth of speed training
- 18 How Speed Training Works ..... 139**
- Sustained Speed—through an increase in the number of repetitions
  - Longer runs improve endurance—and help you improve finish time
  - Running form improves
  - Watch out! Speedwork increases aches, pains and injuries
  - Beware of the ego
- 19 Race Day! ..... 142**
- Rehearsal
  - The afternoon before
  - Race number
  - Computer chip
  - Eating issues
  - Drinking
  - Pack your bag
  - Race day checklist
  - After the start
  - After mid-race
  - The next day
- 20 Mental Toughness ..... 151**
- Left brain vs. right brain
  - Three strategies for staying mentally tough
    - I. Rehearsing Success
    - II. Magic Words
    - III. Dirty Tricks
- 21 Cross Training: Getting Better as You Rest the Legs ..... 157**
- Cross training activities
  - Ease into a new exercise!
  - Water running can improve your running form
  - Fat burning and overall fitness exercises



- Cross training for the upper body
- Weight training
- Don't do these on a non-running day!

**22 Dealing with the Heat..... 163**

- "Forget about a personal record when it's over 60F"
- Hot long runs: when to run, don't wear a hat, taking a pool break, sun screen
- How to adjust pace as the temperature increases
- Heat disease alert: symptoms, risk factors and action plan
- Heat adaptation workout
- Maintaining heat adaptation during the winter

**23 Choosing the Best Shoe for You..... 169**

- How to choose a really good running store
- How to determine your foot type
- Choosing shoes by foot shape and function
- Go by fit and not the size noted on the box
- Racing shoe or lightweight training shoe?
- Shoes for women
- Breaking in a new shoe
- How do you know when it's time to get a new shoe?

**24 The Clothing Thermometer ..... 175**

**25 Practical Eating Issues ..... 177**

- Eating the day before a run, right before a run and during a run
- How much fluid to drink the day before, the morning of a run and during the run
- Preventing side pains
- Maintaining stable blood sugar levels during a run
- The bad side of fat
- Electrolytes
- Drinking/eating schedule before a hard morning run
- Eating during a run
- It is important to re-load after exercise—within 30 minutes

**26 Troubleshooting Performance ..... 181**

- Times are slowing down at end
- Slowing down in the middle of the race
- Nauseous at the end
- Tired during workouts

**27 Problems/Solutions..... 183**

- Side pain
- I feel great one day... and not the next
- Cramps in the muscles

- Upset stomach or diarrhea
- Headache

## **28 Staying Injury-Free..... 189**

- Be sensitive to weak links
- How do you know that you are injured?
- Treatment options
- Treatments while you are waiting to see a doctor
- Preventing injury
- Don't stretch!
- Do the "toe squincher" exercise (prevention of foot and heel injuries)
- Don't increase total mileage or minutes more than 10 % a week more than 2 weeks in a row.
- Drop total mileage in half every 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> week
- Avoid a long stride—whether walking or running

## **29 Injury Troubleshooting ..... 193**

- Quick treatment tips
- For all injuries
- Muscle injuries
- Tendon and foot injuries
- Knee injuries
- Shin injuries
- Best cross training modes to maintain your running conditioning

## **30 Treatment Suggestions—From One Runner to Another ..... 197**

- Knee pain
- Outside of knee pain—Iliotibial Band Syndrome
- Shin pain—"Shin Splints" or Stress Fracture
- Heel pain—Plantar Fascia
- Back of foot—Achilles tendon
- Hip and groin
- Calf muscle

## **31 Products That Enhance Running..... 203**

- The Stick
- Endurox R4
- Other Galloway Books: training schedules, and gifts that keep on giving—even to yourself



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# 1 The Power of Boston: Why Is the Boston Marathon the Greatest?

There is no other marathon in the world that has such history and prestige, and has been run every year since the genesis of our sport. There are races with more scenic courses, higher enrollment, and more prize money. But the BAA Marathon in Boston is a legend and continues to be the top draw among serious marathoners around the world.

In 1896, the first marathon race was run from the plain of Marathon to Athens, to close out the first edition of the Modern Olympic Games. The concept of the event was powerful and many cities wanted to replicate this. New York held one race in the fall of 1896, but did not continue. Boston waited until about one year after the Athens race to hold their first race in 1897. The history of Paul Revere's ride got tangled up in the story somewhere, and the Massachusetts Patriot's Day holiday became the day (third Monday in April). But the concept was the same as the original Olympic race: start 25 miles outside the city and finish in the historic city center. Just as many of the governmental guarantees of freedom were debated in the agora of Athens in 490 BC, the origins of the American spirit can be traced to Boston.

There is no better weekend experience for a runner than that leading up to Patriot's Day each year. The feeling of mutual respect is similar to that experienced at the Olympics: each person had to achieve a high standard to enroll in this race and a feeling of excellence permeates the race activities, clinics, restaurants, lineup and the race itself.

Throughout history, many countries have used the Boston Marathon to select their Olympic teams. Until the late 1970s, Boston was the unofficial world championship each year. Today there are several top races with deep world class fields, but none has surpassed the bragging rights of winning the Boston Marathon.

Boston families and groups of friends have established their territories along the race route and pack the race route even in the rain. I've never experienced a more passionate group of spectators.

Most find that the journey to qualify requires sacrifice, fatigue, aches, pains and frustrations. But I've never heard anyone say that it wasn't worth the struggle.

## 2 My All-Time Favorite Marathon: Sharing Boston 1996 With My Dad

Not because it was the 100<sup>th</sup> running of Boston... Not because it was my 100<sup>th</sup> marathon...

Before I started running, I had been a fat and inactive kid. Like many boys, my dad was my hero—I wanted to be an athlete as he had been. I tried football, in which he had achieved “all-state” status. By the end of that season I knew that my temperament wasn’t right for the sport that was supposed to “make a man of you.”

My dad suggested that I try cross-country/distance running, probably because he thought I might burn off some of my extra fat. When I heard from several of the lazy kids that the track coach was lenient and I might pass the time hiding out in the woods near the track, I signed up. But an upper classman invited me to run with his group, and I enjoyed the jokes, discussions and gossip during the run. After 10 weeks, I was hooked on running. Dad was quietly pleased with my interest in running, and supplied me with several training books (including Arthur Lydiard’s first book) which opened up a new way of thinking about running in the early 60s.

As I moved on to college, I became more fit, while Dad became obese—more than 65 pounds heavier than his football weight. As I continued to read and expand the running and fitness library that Dad had provided in my high school years, I became concerned for his health. When I suggested that he simply walk around the park in front of his office, he had one excuse after another. Increasingly his attitude became more negative, he had no energy after work, and his varicose vein pain and allergy problems became worse each year. After several years of discussions, I stopped arguing with him.

The wake-up call came at a high school reunion. During the weekend, the former football team assembled, and at age 52 only 12 out of 25 were alive. Each death was due to lifestyle degenerative disease and Dad had recently been told by his doctor that he was headed down the same path. On the long drive back home, something clicked, and he decided to get back in shape the next day.

The next afternoon, Elliott Galloway started around the park in front of his office and could not make it to the first telephone pole. He was out of breath, exhausted and embarrassed. Two days later he was out there again with the mission to reach one more telephone pole. He continued on this trek and within 3 months could make it



around the 3 mile loop. After another 90 days he ran two loops which empowered him to run the big hometown event, the Peachtree 10K. Dad didn't stop. Seven years later he was running marathons, had shed 55 pounds and had turned his attitude around. The only time that his varicose veins and allergy aggravation kicked in was when he was unable to run.

Throughout his life, Dad had a heart rhythm issue. At the age of 75, he was running a race every weekend, including a marathon or two every year. While Dr John Cantwell encouraged Dad to run, John was concerned about the significant stress of a marathon on someone who pushed himself to the limit in every race (Dad never listened to my kinder, gentler advice). He struck a deal with Dr. Cantwell: his last marathon would be the 1996 Boston Marathon. It would be my 100<sup>th</sup> marathon, but clearly the one that I will remember most for the rest of my life.

While we had run the same marathons on the same days, this would be the first one that we were to run together, the whole way. Each mile was filled with his philosophy, my questions and our good memories. We talked about the fact that only 23 Bostons had been run when Dad was born. I wanted him to take walk breaks every 3 minutes but he didn't want to walk at all. We compromised by walking every mile. He didn't often follow my suggestions.

This was my 5<sup>th</sup> Boston, but the others had been fiercely competitive efforts. This time we shared views on the scenery, enjoyed and interacted with the energetic crowd, talked about history. Some of the landmarks I had never seen due to my competitive tunnel vision. Dad should have walked every 3 minutes, and slowed down during the last 6 miles, but we savored every minute.

As we made the final turn, and looked down the long straight to the finish banner, Dad took off. We were zooming toward a time barrier which we were determined to break and we did: 5:59:48. As he recounted the race, numerous times, he explained that he would have run a lot faster if I hadn't held him back. I never disagreed.

Now that I've crossed the mid-60s, my Dad is my hero...again.



### 3 Six Steps to Qualifying for the Boston Marathon

In this book you'll find the resources to train for the goal you will need to qualify for the Boston Marathon. In addition, you'll learn how realistic it is for you to meet your goal, make adjustments, and solve problems along the way. Your resource for the latest logistical information is [www.baa.org](http://www.baa.org). This book will give information listed as of the writing of the book. Some of the dates and rules may change from year to year—so consult this website for the latest information.

1. Visit [www.baa.org](http://www.baa.org) to find the time you will need to qualify, based upon your age on the day of the next running of the Boston Marathon. For example, if you are 49 years old now, but will turn 50 before the Boston Marathon (April of the next year) you will need to meet the 50-54 standard. Currently, the organization in charge (BAA) allows times run up to 18 months before the race date desired—but check on this. The field is limited to 25,000 runners, and has been closing in late January or early February before the race date. Because this is a “first come, first served” system, get your entry in early.
2. Pick the training schedule in this book that applies to your goal. It helps to have the full term for best results. To learn how all of the elements of training fit together, I conduct running schools in various locations and weekend beach retreats. Be sure to subscribe to my free newsletter for updates:

[www.JeffGalloway.com](http://www.JeffGalloway.com)

3. Pick several races that have courses which offer the best chance of qualifying. These races must have “certified” courses. This means that the distance has been determined to be accurate by the governing body of our sport: USA Track and Field. I have included the current top 20+ in this book, according to [www.marathonguide.com](http://www.marathonguide.com), which is a great resource in choosing races. Another resource is [www.runnersworld.com](http://www.runnersworld.com). Because there are many variables beyond your control that affect your finish time, it's best to have 3 or 4 options, which are 3-4 weeks apart. If you get into one of the races and it's not your day, you can run at training run pace, and save your race effort for the next one on the schedule.
4. Use the “magic mile,” explained in this book, to monitor progress. It is productive for most to run marathons as training runs before you are physically ready to qualify, to gain marathon racing experience. Fine-tune your training to improve your times, as noted in this book.
5. Once you have your time, register online at [www.baa.org](http://www.baa.org), secure a hotel room ASAP and arrange for your transportation. Congratulations!
6. If this is your first Boston, I strongly suggest that you not try to run all-out. If you slow down by about a minute per mile from what you could run, you can enjoy the weekend, the crowds, your fellow runners and the wonderful Boston restaurants/taverns afterwards.



## 4 How to Choose the Right Course— Some Are Faster

All courses are not created equal. By doing a little research and choosing the right venue, you can improve your chance of qualifying. In the process you'll probably discover a number of other races you want to put on your marathon "to do" list.

There are several websites that allow you compare courses—especially [www.marathonguide.com](http://www.marathonguide.com) and [www.runnersworld.com](http://www.runnersworld.com). Look through these for significant elevation changes, typical temperature, quantity of turns, and any other factors that either tend to help you or hurt you.

Pick 3 candidates that are 3-4 weeks apart each. In my experience, you have about a 25 % chance of having somewhat perfect conditions on any given day of the year. By picking 3 that are 3-4 weeks apart, you will be able to run the first one or two as a training run, when facing challenges such as temperature increase, infection, minor injury, etc. This means that you don't have to waste 6 months of training if things aren't perfect on the big day. It helps to add 3 additional miles to marathon distance to gain maximum benefit from the 29 mile distance—as the endurance effect will only last for 4 weeks.

Read the runner reviews of races. These are usually quite honest, giving you a good feel for the race, while usually presenting the problems that tend to occur.

When there are more than 10,000 runners, you will tend to run significantly farther than race distance. Many of my e-coach clients who run in races with more than 30,000 runners often find that they register more than a mile farther on their GPS devices. For the best chance in achieving time goals, it's best to run in races with 5,000 or less on roads that are not too narrow or have too many turns.

Those who train mostly in rolling terrain may not run as fast on a perfectly flat course, because they will fatigue the flat muscles quickly. Those who don't train on hills should avoid hilly marathon courses.

Some race routes have significant downhill sections. For those who have trained for this, there is often a significant time improvement. Without downhill training, however, the downhill in the race can be abusive, and result in a slowdown at the end, with extended recovery.

There's no way you can predict the temperature. The research shows that you'll run faster when the temperature is below 60F (14C) than when it's hotter. By looking at the average high temperature, you can find a place where it is more likely to be cool. But as you know with the weather, there are no guarantees.

According to [www.marathonguide.com](http://www.marathonguide.com), the courses that produced the highest percentage of Boston qualifiers (2017) are the following (for current information check that website or the site of the marathon itself):

Last Chance BQ.2 Chicagoland Marathon, IL – 52% (Sept)

Erie Marathon, PA – 44% (Sept)

REVEL Mt Charleston, NV – 40% (April)

Light at the End of the Tunnel Marathon, WA – 39% (June)

The Tunnel Lite Marathon, WA – 35% (Sept)

Via Marathon, PA – 34% (Sept)

Pocono Mountain Run for the Red Marathon, PA – 34% (May)

Mountains 2 Beach Marathon, CA – 32% (May)

Peak to Creek Marathon, NC – 29% (Oct)

Baystate Marathon, MA – 28% (Oct)

Albany Marathon, GA – 27% (Mar)

California International Marathon, CA – 27% (Dec)

Jacksonville Marathon, FL – 25% (Dec)

Jack and Jill's Downhill Marathon, WA – 25% (July)

REVEL Canyon City Marathon, CA – 25% (Nov)

Big Cottonwood Marathon, UT – 25% (Sept)

Marquette Marathon, MI – 24% (Sept)

Sugarloaf Marathon, ME – 23% (May)

Road2Hope Hamilton Marathon, ON – 23% (Nov)

Ventura Marathon, CA – 23% (Oct)





## 5 A Tour of the Boston Course With Bill Rodgers

### Secrets of the Boston course as told by Bill Rodgers

Bill Rodgers, Amby Burfoot and I ran together at Wesleyan University (Middletown, CT) during the 60s. None of us showed much national running potential as high school athletes and were by-passed in the offering of scholarships. Wesleyan didn't even offer athletic scholarships. Early in his collegiate career, Amby envisioned that his best event was not on the collegiate competition schedule. While competing for the team, Amby added miles to his training, traveled to various New England road races, and surprised us and the world by winning the Boston Marathon during the spring of his senior year. This set a standard of excellence which energized Bill and me. Four years later I made the 1972 Olympic team. Bill waited a bit longer but surpassed our accomplishments by winning the Boston Marathon in 75, 78, 79 and 80, breaking the course record twice.

When I decided to write this book, I couldn't think of anyone who knew the Boston course better than Bill. For years he trained on the course, did repeats on Heartbreak Hill. So on the appointed day, just after 12 noon we arrived at the starting line, ate a Greek style pizza at "Bill's Pizza" near the start (no affiliation with Bill Rodgers) and began our tour. Bill's statements are in quotes.

#### Mile 1

The elevation at the starting line is 490 feet. Randomly, the year that Phidippides (or whomever) ran from the battle of Marathon to Athens was 490 BC. The staging ground leading to the start is flat. But just after crossing the line you'll get a downhill boost for about seven-tenths of a mile. "Don't go too fast here—it's very steep in places. It's really crowded—don't trip."

#### Mile 2

There are slight ups and mostly gentle downs as the course (on Route 135) moves through the hamlet of Ashland, the original starting location of the Boston Marathon. The first race in 1897 was started by the first Olympic champion in the 400 meters and 100 meters, Thomas Burke, who called the 15-man field to the line he had drawn on the dirt road, and said "Go." According to reports, there were 10 finishers. In 1924 the Boston Marathon officials pushed the start back to Hopkington.

"Many runners lose it, because they don't slow down when the course levels out—and pay for this later. I was able to use the hills later in the course because I saved myself during the first half of the race. I never worried about the finish time—just tried to do my best."

### Mile 3

Moving out of Ashland, the course is relatively flat, but still gently downhill. "Ashland is where I received my first 'professional' payment. I was paid \$50 to talk to the Ashland cross-country team."

### Mile 4

Mostly a flat mile with minor rolling. The Wildwood Cemetery is on the right near the 4-mile mark.

"I disagree with the decision not to allow a World Record on the Boston course. The IAAF (which sanctions records) says there is too much of an elevation drop from Hopkington to downtown Boston. But only one world's best time has ever been run here by the men."

### Mile 5

The elevation changes continue to be minimal. There's a reservoir on the left for the full length of this mile. Just before the 5-mile mark, there's a slight uphill, followed by a slight downhill for 200 yards. Bill says, "You will have energy at this point, and may be tempted to pick up the pace. But it is still crowded—settle in and save your energy."

### Mile 6

Approaching Framingham, the course is mostly flat with minor ups and downs. In the early days of the Boston race, this was where runners received their first time check (one-fourth of the way to the finish). There were no mile marks nor pace times given back then. "This is classic small town America, town square, residents sitting in lawn chairs—usually a big turnout, here. The crowds start to build here—it gets more and more exciting as the race continues."

"There is a large Brazilian community here. One year I couldn't get to the start to help with festivities because the Brazilians were celebrating their team's victory in the World Cup."

### Mile 7

Course elevation shows a slight downhill—most don't notice this. About 6.3 miles you'll see Farm Pond on your left. Just after mile 7 you'll pass Mary Dennison Playground on your right.

### Mile 8

The course flattens after Framingham, with a slight uphill of about 200 yards in the middle of this mile. Lined with repair shops, hardware supplies, etc., this is not

the most scenic part of the course. There aren't a lot of spectators along this line of businesses because it's a holiday and the road is closed.

### **Mile 9**

After the 8-mile mark there is a gentle downhill, but most don't notice it. As you approach the 9-mile marker, notice Fisk Reservoir on the right. "I believe this is where Boston champion Tarzan Brown jumped in the lake, and came back to win the race in the early days."

### **Mile 10**

There is a slight uphill that is quite gentle, leading into the pleasant town of Natick. "Natick has a beautiful town square and big crowds."

### **Miles 11 and 12**

For most of the first mile, the course seems to be flat with a very slight uphill. Just after the 11-mile mark, the elevation drops for about a mile with only a few slight upgrades. "At this point you begin to hear the cheering of the Wellesley College students, about a mile ahead. The screaming excitement pulls you along."

### **Mile 13**

After mile mark 12, with Morse Pond on your left, there is a very gentle uphill with some slight rolling down. Your eardrums will get a workout from the Wellesley students. Moving into the upscale town of Wellesley, there are huge crowds, parks, and interesting houses. As you leave the town, you'll pass the halfway point. "During the Boston Spring you never know about the weather: sometimes you see beautiful blooms and sometimes you have the last chill of winter."

### **Miles 14 and 15**

There is a light uphill trend to these two miles, with a few short and gentle downs. Just after the 15-mile mark, be prepared for a significant downhill of about half a mile. "I made my move here. When I lived near the course, I trained on this stretch often and practiced this. This was a huge advantage for me."

### **Miles 16 and 17**

After the 16-mile mark, there's a significant uphill over I-95, which continues past the 17-mile mark. This is the first of 4 hills in a row, with Heartbreak Hill as the finale. The first upgrade is gradual but can take it out of you if you push a little too hard.