

Galloway Bowling (and other reasons to hate "Mr. Marathon")

The following is the only article I've ever had rejected by the Port City Pacers PaceLetter

I hate Jeff Galloway. That may seem a bit odd, since he's a nice enough character. But what's really strange is how I hate the guy on so many different levels. I try to give everyone the benefit of the doubt, but people, the man is a menace.

Perhaps I should explain myself. I first started hating "Mr. Marathon" when I started coaching marathoners myself. It can be hard enough convincing beginning runners and walkers that they can finish a 26.2-mile race without some joker going around telling people they have to do 26, 28 or even 30 (thirty!) miles in training first.

Now, we've all had coaches tell us crazy things. Like when Mr. D'Amato, my junior high school gym teacher, told us he had to stare at us over the shower wall to make sure we "got the family jewels all polished." When that kind of thing comes from a drooling, pot-bellied guy in way-too-small polyester gym shorts you know enough to be skeptical (and perhaps notify the authorities.) But when training advice comes from a former Olympian, most people tend to buy into it without question.

Well kids, I'm here to tell you that there ain't no Easter Bunny, and you don't need to go more than 18 - 20 miles in training to get through a marathon—and call me a heretic, 15 miles is probably enough if your goal is to "just" finish the race at a very comfortable pace. It's no party having to put out fires all over the country convincing people they can get through a marathon without having to do 30 mile workouts first, but if that were the end of it I wouldn't give it another thought. But that ain't the end of it. Somewhere along the way Galloway discovered walking and it's been a little slice of pain in the ass pie ever since.

Marathons used to be orderly affairs. You'd line up according to pace, wait for the gun to go off, then head towards the finish line at roughly the same pace from start to finish. You passed a few people enroute, a few people passed you, but traffic never stopped and started like I-75 through an Atlanta rush-hour like it does in any big marathon today. And guess who single-handedly foisted this evil upon us? Yup. Jeff Galloway. I hold him in the same contempt as the guy who taught little old ladies to drive 52 mph in the passing lane. But what Galloway has done is far worse. At least blue-hairs are predictable. Rarely will they drive without brake lights and come to a complete stop in the passing lane. But that's exactly what Galloway's disciples do.

On his orders, "Galloway Runners" stop to take walking breaks every mile during marathons. And to make matters worse, Galloway suggests they do so at the water tables. Now that's all well and good for them, but what about the rest of us? If you haven't done a marathon recently, watch out. And bring your own water, 'cuz you ain't going to get any at the water tables.

The way I see it there are three options: Slam to a stop like the Galloway Jugheads; do your best to get around them (and I say "them" because they always come in twos and threes and tens); or do what I do. Go bowling. Galloway bowling. That's right, when a gaggle of Galloweenies decides to stop dead in their tracks right in front of you, hold your ground. Knock down as many as you can, but if you miss a few, pick up the spare at the next water stop.

That may sound sort of devious or nasty, but I believe in Darwinism. Stupidity shouldn't be coddled or rewarded. And believe it or not, my approach seems to work. I have a very difficult time picking up spares

because after getting plowed over by a racewalker going full-bore, even the most addle-brained Galloway disciple will look over his shoulder before stopping.

But that's all I'm asking for anyway. So thanks, Jeff, for getting America marathoning. Now get 'em the Hell out of my way!



Photo by Teresa Bennett

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