

RUNNER'S WORLD  
**CHALLENGE**

Half Marathon Edition

# BEAT THE CLOCK

Training for and racing 13.1 miles requires guts, especially when you're chasing a big time goal such as breaking two hours or going under 1:30. The runners over these pages are all attempting milestone half marathons, so we asked the experts to analyse their training. With their advice - and our failsafe sub-2:00 training plan - you can make the breakthrough, too ►

Words: Ruth Emmett

**GREAT OUTDOORS**  
Mary should ideally be training outside to be race-ready



**BREAK** 2:30

<b>Half marathon challenger</b>	<b>Location</b>
<b>MARY FERGUSON</b>	<b>Manchester</b>
<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Age</b>
<b>Marketing at Ladyzone Gym</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Goal race</b>	<b>Current PB</b>
<b>Great North Run</b>	<b>2:37</b>
<b>Running CV</b>	

A runner since 2005, Mary has run two half marathons. She finished the second in 2:43, six minutes slower than her first.

#### Why this time?

"I had to briefly stop because of a terrible blister 20 minutes into my last Great North Run, which also meant I had to run/walk towards the end. This year, I'm going back determined to break the 2:30 barrier and run the whole thing."

## TYPICAL TRAINING ROUTINE

Mary only gets to run outside once a week, preferring to train on the treadmill once every few days. "I'll typically go for 5K, trying to beat my own time each week," she says. Having just started working with a personal trainer, Mary is adding more structure to her training schedule and hopes to start basic interval sessions on the treadmill. She's also doing more resistance training with weights, hoping to build muscle and tone up. "To test my progress, I'm trying to do one 10K a month in the lead up to the Great North Run," she says. "I've got my 10K down to 1:03:00." She also wants to avoid blisters.

## TRAIN SMARTER

### WEIGHT A DAY ▶

Lifting weights can be good for runners: it burns fat, builds bone density and ramps up your core strength. If you're worried about bulking out too much, Anderson recommends opting for light weights with a higher number of reps (in the 10-15 range). To ensure she's well-rested, Mary shouldn't lift weights the day before key runs or in the week prior to a race.

### BLISTER BAN ▶

With a gradual buildup of mileage - and with quality running socks and well fitting trainers - Mary should be able to avoid blisters. "It's a bad idea to wear anything new for a race: socks should be well used and trainers should be old faithfuls, not box-fresh," says O'Toole.

### GO LONG ▶

Extending her long run to 12 or 13 miles will help stoke Mary's confidence. And there's no shame in run/walking come race day. With a ratio of five minutes of running to 30 seconds of walking, she could still break the 2:30 barrier.

### RUN MORE! ▶

"Mary can greatly improve her time simply by bumping up her mileage," says running coach Janet Hamilton. She should boost it by no more than 10 per cent a week, starting with her Sunday long run. In the second week, the mileage bump should go towards a fourth (shorter) running day. Every third week, Hamilton advises that Mary maintains her mileage rather than increase it. She can stick with that pattern (add to the long run, add to one of her regular midweek easy runs, then maintain) until she's running 25 miles a week.

### TAKE IT OUTSIDE ▶

Running outdoors prepares you for race day physically and mentally. "The treadmill doesn't fully replicate the normal human gait cycle," says O'Toole. He says Mary should try to do all her training outside, but if not, "set the treadmill incline to at least one per cent to more closely match running on flat ground outside."

## DO YOU HAVE WHAT IT TAKES?

If you can meet these key indicators, you've got a good shot at cracking 2:30, says coach Janet Hamilton

PB (favourable conditions)	2:36-2:38
PB (hills, heat or wind)	12:38-2:40
Half marathons under your belt	1
Weekly mileage base	20-30
Recent 10K or marathon time (in the bag)	1:06; 5:10
Recent 10K or marathon time (good shot)	1:07; 5:17
Recent 10K or marathon time (still possible)	1:10; 5:30

**“I know I’ve got  
it in me to break  
the two-hour  
mark for the half”**

**ALL ABOUT QUALITY**  
To fit training around his  
unpredictable work schedule,  
Stuart should focus on  
quality over quantity





<b>Half marathon challenger</b>	<b>Location</b>
<b>STUART MEER</b>	Derby
<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Age</b>
Freelance courier	35
<b>Goal Race</b>	<b>Current PB</b>
Great North Run	2:08
<b>Running CV</b>	

Stuart started running three years ago to shift a few pounds. His times have fluctuated: he posted a "disappointing" 2:11 at his fourth half marathon, the 2011 Great North Run.

### Why this time?

"After a 46:00 10K PB, I know I've got it in me to break the two-hour mark for the half," he says. "But I keep coming in seven or eight minutes over."

## DO YOU HAVE WHAT IT TAKES?

If you can meet these key indicators, you've got a good shot at cracking 2:00, says coach Janet Hamilton

PB (favourable conditions)	2:04-2:06
PB (hills, heat or wind)	2:08-2:12
Half marathons under your belt	1-2
Weekly mileage base	25-40
Recent 10K or marathon time (in the bag)	52:51; 4:08
Recent 10K or marathon time (good shot)	53:56; 4:13
Recent 10K or marathon time (still possible)	55:45; 4:21

## TYPICAL TRAINING ROUTINE

▶ Stuart runs five days a week. His workouts comprise two three- to five-mile easy runs, a six-mile hillwork session (consisting of 10 uphill sprints), one six- to 14-mile long run and one interval session (8x400m fast with 200m recovery). "I struggle to fit training around my unpredictable work hours, so I have to keep my schedule flexible," says Stuart. "I usually squeeze in two sessions of resistance exercises a week."

## TRAIN SMARTER

### TAKE THREE ▶

"If he's pushed for time, Stuart could cut down to three core quality runs a week: a recovery run, a speedwork or hill reps session, and a long slow run," says coach Liz Fulford (fullpotential.co.uk). He should shoot for at least 25 miles in total.

### STAY STRONG ▶

"After a warm-up jog in a park, run fast to a bench and do 10 press-ups or squats, run fast to the next bench and repeat," says Fulford. "Jog for two minutes, then do 10 lunges or crunches." Three sets will help build strength.

### GO LONG ▶

"Stuart should make sure that his long run is within 10-14 miles for some quality base mileage," says O'Toole.

### HILLS ▶

"Short hill sprints are great for 10K training, but for a half, Stuart needs to do longer reps," says O'Toole. Start with four 400-800m reps and build up to eight.

### PACE YOURSELF ▶

"Stuart's 10K pace is 7:40min/mile but he ran his best half considerably slower, at 9:46min/mile," says personal trainer Craig O'Toole (cotpt.com). O'Toole recommends tweaking his speedwork by doing four (building up to eight) one-mile reps at 9:00min/mile with 400m recovery.

## THE SUB-2:00 SUCCESS PLAN

The **RUNNER'S WORLD** half marathon training programme gets you to 1:59:59 with two quality runs per week - a long, slow distance and goal pace (or faster) workout

WEEK	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN	TOTAL
1	Rest/XT	4 miles easy (10:30min/mile)	Rest/XT	Tempo: 5 miles with 3 miles at 8:54min/mile	4 miles easy (10:30min/mile)	Rest/XT	LSD: 8 miles (10:30min/mile)	21 miles
2	Rest/XT	5 miles easy (10:30min/mile)	Rest/XT	Mile Repeats: 2 x 1 mile (8:25 pace)	4 miles easy (10:30min/mile)	Rest/XT	LSD: 8 miles (10:30min/mile)	22 miles
3	Rest/XT	5 miles easy (10:30min/mile)	Rest/XT	5 miles with 3 miles at HMP (9:09min/mile)	4 miles easy (10:30min/mile)	Rest/XT	LSD: 9 miles (10:30min/mile)	23 miles
4	Rest/XT	5 miles easy (10:30min/mile)	Rest/XT	Tempo: 6 miles with 4 miles at 9:00min/mile	4 miles easy (10:30min/mile)	Rest/XT	LSD: 9 miles (10:30min/mile)	24 miles
5	Rest/XT	5 miles easy (10:24min/mile)	3 miles easy (10:24min/mile)	4 miles with 2 miles at HMP (9:09min/mile)	4 miles easy (10:24min/mile)	Rest/XT	5 miles (10:24min/mile)	21 miles
6	Rest/XT	4 miles easy (10:24min/mile)	Rest/XT	Mile Repeats: 3 x 1 mile (8:20 pace)	4 miles easy (10:24min/mile)	Rest/XT	LSD: 10 miles (10:24min/mile)	25 miles
7	Rest/XT	3 miles easy (10:24min/mile)	3 miles easy (10:24min/mile)	Tempo: 6 miles with 4 miles at 8:54min/mile	3 miles easy (10:24min/mile)	Rest/XT	LSD: 11 miles (10:24min/mile)	26 miles
8	Rest/XT	3 miles easy (10:24min/mile)	3 miles easy (10:24min/mile)	Tempo: 7 miles with 5 miles at 9:00min/mile	4 miles easy (10:24min/mile)	Rest/XT	LSD: 13 miles (10:24min/mile)	30 miles
9	Rest/XT	3 miles easy (10:18min/mile)	3 miles easy (10:18min/mile)	Mile Repeats: 4 x 1 mile (8:15 pace)	3 miles easy (10:18min/mile)	Rest/XT	LSD: 11 miles (10:18min/mile)	28 miles
10	Rest/XT	3 miles easy (10:30min/mile)	3 miles easy (10:30min/mile)	Tempo: 5 miles with 3 miles at 8:54min/mile	3 miles easy (10:30min/mile)	Rest/XT	Race day!	27.1 miles

**KEY ▶ REST/XT** Take a rest day or do moderate cross-training with a no-impact activity such as yoga or swimming **TEMPO** Run easy for one mile to warm up. Then ease into the given pace. Run easy for a mile to cool down. Tempos should feel challenging; on a scale of one to 10, your effort will feel like a seven or eight. You should be able to utter just a few words at a time. These runs train your body to sustain speed over distance **LSD** This is a long, slow distance run that will build your endurance. Run at an easy pace; you should be able to hold a conversation **MILE REPEATS** After a one-mile warm-up, run one mile at the given pace, jog two laps around the track (or run for half a mile) for recovery. Repeat that cycle as directed. Cool down with one mile of easy running **HMP** Half marathon pace. This is the pace that you hope to maintain in the race. Run one mile easy to warm up, and one mile easy to cool down