

Race Tactics for Competitive Running from SeriousRunning.com



If running is 90% mental then why not think about the mental aspect of running a race. I'm not talking about working on your mental toughness to push through. It's the "thinking" aspect of competition that helps you win the race. Here are five pointers to help you compete better:

1. **Never look back** - Too many runners do this. Never look back to see how close the runner behind you is. This screams that you are tired and just holding on. If you want to gauge your lead, wait for a switch back and look out the corner of your eye. Switchbacks on trail runs are perfect for this. Never let the runner behind you see you turn your head around. If you see someone do this, pass them.
2. **Wave and Talk** - When going through water points wave and say thank you to the volunteers on the race course. They will appreciate it, you will feel more positive, and most importantly, the competition around you *won't* think you are tired.
3. **Pass Lightly** - When approaching someone you want to pass, try to be as quiet as possible. You want to be able to zoom right past them without them noticing or having time to react. Breathe lightly when passing. When you pass someone, you want them to think you are feeling better than you really are. You're racing. Shorten and lighten your breath. Of course you are tired. Your opponent will think, "He's feeling fine. He's not even breathing!" Or "She's not breathing."
4. **Pass on Uphills** - This also makes your opponent think you are less tired than you are and is a great way to opportunity to gain ground. Everyone runs slower running uphill. Not you though. You run faster.
5. **Stretch Out Your Stride on Downhills**¹ - If you open up your stride slightly when going downhill, you will gain ground without expending more energy. Just relax and tilt your body slightly forward. Your momentum and gravity will carry you down the hill and help you increase your stride length. This longer stride will stretch out your muscles, improve your stride, and give you a burst of energy when you hit the flat.

¹ Added by Coach G. Sanderlin 10-13-09