

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



BREAK

1:30

Half marathon challenger	Location
STEPHEN HARRINGTON	King's Lynn
Occupation	Age
Computer programmer	45
Goal race	Current PB
Great Eastern Run	1:31
Running CV	

Stephen has been running for five years, and ran his first half marathon, the 2009 Great Eastern Run, Peterborough, in 1:34.

Why this time?

"After just missing out with a sub-1:31 half in March 2010, I had a disastrous London Marathon, limping half the course thanks to a hip injury," he says. "After a lot of physio, I'm ready to run again."

BACK ON HIS FEET
Recovering from a hip injury, Stephen should focus on building core strength



TYPICAL TRAINING ROUTINE

Before an overuse injury to his hip, Stephen ran five days a week: an easy run, a 6-8K tempo run @ 6:30min/mile, one set of intervals (6-8x800m @ 6:00min/mile with 200m jog recoveries in between), a fartlek session and a 10-13-mile long run followed by hillwork. The strain he put on his body resulted in five weeks on crutches after he blew up at his first marathon last year. "I should have dropped out," Stephen admits. "Six months on, I started running again and gradually built up to 40-50 miles over four days a week. But my injury's made me wary of reintroducing speedwork."

TRAIN SMARTER

MAXIMISE LONG RUNS

Stephen should make two of every three long runs progressive (starting slow and getting faster). This ups his ability to hold a fast pace at the end of a race - and adds quality mileage. "Run one third very easy, one third steady and one third fast," says coach Nick Anderson (runningwithus.com). At his current level, Stephen might finish each run at around 7:00min/mile pace.

CORE CARE

Stephen can shore up his recovery and build core strength with Pilates or a body conditioning class. At the first hint of his hip flaring up, he should switch to gentle cross-training for a couple of days.

REDUCE THE VOLUME

Every third week, Anderson advises cutting the intensity and taking an easy week to prevent overuse injuries: try one light interval session, one long run and two 30-minute easy runs. Stephen can keep up the momentum by doing a 5K Parkrun (parkrun.com) at the end of every easy week.

EXTEND THE LONG RUN

"Runners chasing fast PBs should go over distance four to six times before race day," Anderson says. So, adding no more than 10 per cent each week, Stephen should gradually extend his long run to up to 18 miles, prioritising a recovery day afterwards.

INTERVALS

Once the progression runs feel comfortable, Anderson says there's no reason why Stephen shouldn't restart his tempo and interval workouts: "Build up to 10x800m, but do the odd-numbered reps at tempo pace (5K pace plus 40 seconds per mile) and the even-numbered reps at target 5K pace, taking jog recoveries of 90 seconds maximum." This workout will help to fine-tune pacing and it also teaches the body to run hard for longer.

DO YOU HAVE WHAT IT TAKES?

If you can meet these key indicators, you've got a good shot at cracking 1:30, says coach Janet Hamilton (runningstrong.com)

PB (favourable conditions)	1:31-1:35
PB (hills, heat or wind)	1:36-1:39
Half marathons under your belt	2-4
Weekly mileage base	35-45
Recent 10K or marathon time (in the bag)	39:30; 3:06
Recent 10K or marathon time (good shot)	40:30; 3:10
Recent 10K or marathon time (still possible)	41:50; 3:16

IMAGE: NIGEL FARROW, JULIAN ANDREWS



THAT'S THE SPIRIT
To get a PB, Helen needs to work on her competitive side

TYPICAL TRAINING ROUTINE

Lucky enough never to suffer from a lack of motivation, Helen says, **"I actually feel worse on days when I don't run."** I started off going out six or seven times a week, but I reined myself in and forced myself to have a few rest days." She now packs in 35 miles a week over five days: two five-milers, two **eight-milers** and finishes up with **a long run of around 11 miles.** "I vary my routes – going out on **cycle paths, trails and hills – but I don't do specific speedwork,"** Helen says. "I tend to just go out and run as fast as I feel like running."

TRAIN SMARTER

UP THE THRESHOLD

▶ A couple of times a week, Helen should work on her running economy by including some reps at threshold (or tempo) pace – on a scale of one to 10, that's a perceived exertion of seven. She can start with four sets of five minutes, building to five sets of five minutes, then three lots of 10 minutes, all with a one-minute jog recovery in between the repeats. These will help to improve her body's ability to transport oxygen to the muscles and the heart.

ADD HILLS ▶ Helen already varies her running terrain, but taking to the hills for a more structured session will strengthen legs and boost stamina. She should insert four to eight two-minute repeats once a week into the early half of her training.

GO LONG ▶ Helen's packing in enough mileage, but in order to get used to maintaining her target pace on tired legs, she should start doing progression runs a few months before the race. "Every other weekend, try 40 minutes easy, 40 minutes steady and then 40 minutes at 1:45 pace – which is 8:00min/mile," says Anderson.

OUT AND BACK ▶ Although she doesn't lack enthusiasm, Helen really needs to stoke her competitive drive to hit a new personal best. "She should try dividing one of those eight-milers into a simple out-and-back run. Once a week, she could run four miles in one direction, turn around and then aim to beat herself by getting back to her starting point two minutes quicker," says Anderson.

DRILL IT ▶ "Drills fire up the muscles and joints so that speed workouts are more effective," says running coach Tony Coffey. Before her out-and-back and threshold runs, Helen could try a few 30m sets of high knees, skips and hamstring kicks.



Half marathon challenger	Location
HELEN WEBSTER	Chippenham
Occupation	Age
Magazine editor	33
Goal race	Current PB
Freckleton Half	1:53
Running CV	

A runner for five years, Helen has completed four half marathons, but she has only managed to knock four minutes off her time.

Why this time?

"I've always measured my progress by distance, building from 5K to a full marathon," she says. "But having realised that the 13.1-miler is my favourite race, now I want to concentrate on how fast I can run, not just how far."

DO YOU HAVE WHAT IT TAKES?

If you can meet these key indicators, you've got a good shot at cracking 1:45, says coach Janet Hamilton

PB (favourable conditions)	1:45-1:50
PB (hills, heat or wind)	1:52-1:55
Half marathons under your belt	2-3
Weekly mileage base	30-45
Recent 10K or marathon time (in the bag)	46:00; 3:37
Recent 10K or marathon time (good shot)	47:15; 3:42
Recent 10K or marathon time (still possible)	49:00; 3:51

**“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





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

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.

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.

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.

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

BREAK 2:15

Half marathon challenger	Location
SALLY CHAMBERS	London
Occupation	Age
Marketing manager	28
Goal race	Current PB
Great North Run	2:25
Running CV	

A relatively new runner, Sally did her first 13.1-miler, the Royal Parks Half, London, last year.

Why this time?

"I ran the whole thing without stopping last time, but my split times show I slowed down drastically in the last two miles. I really need to get the knack of consistent pacing."



TYPICAL TRAINING ROUTINE

▶ "I didn't do enough long distance training before my last race - I only banked two long runs of 11 miles each, which is probably why I ended up tailing off so badly towards the finish," Sally says. To remedy the problem this time round, she's now adding one mile every week to her long run, aiming to surpass 13 miles before the race. As well as another relaxed weekly run, Sally also does two classes with British Military Fitness (BMF) each week; these outdoor group sessions include structured hill work and sprint training. Sally says, "My next big challenge is to get the knack of consistent pacing - I've heard the Great North Run is hilly."

TRAIN SMARTER

MILITARY PRECISION

▶ Sally should keep up the hard work at British Military Fitness: "It's challenging, varied and will certainly help her to combat hills," says Fulford. But she could also try squeezing in a slow jog to and from the classes, and take every extra chance to fit in hill work. On a hill with an easy incline, this might mean running up at a strong pace for 90 seconds, jogging back down at an easy pace, and then repeating this pattern four times.

KEEP TRACK ▶

Recording workout stats in a training log will help Sally gain race-day confidence.

ADD FARTLEKS ▶

"More variety will give Sally more faith in her ability," says exercise physiologist and coach Matt Dixon (purplepatchfitness.com). Fartleks (Swedish for 'speed play') are ideal: Sally can run intervals of varying length and pace using park benches and lamp posts as distance markers. As a fairly new runner, she should limit these workouts to a total distance of no more than two miles.

COMFORT ZONE

▶ "The third run of her training week could be a comfortable long run - and this should be roughly half the distance of her long weekend run," Fulford says. "Run the last two miles at a slightly more challenging pace to get used to how it feels to run on tired legs." This will help Sally to avoid petering out towards the end of her next half marathon.

BUILD UP ▶

"Sally needs a more structured schedule - at least three runs a week," says Fulford. The cornerstone is the long weekend run: building up to 13 miles will boost Sally's endurance. "I recommend that she adds a mile every two weeks rather than weekly," Fulford says.

DO YOU HAVE WHAT IT TAKES?

If you can meet these key indicators, you've got a good shot at cracking 2:15, says coach Janet Hamilton

PB (favourable conditions)	2:20-2:22
PB (hills, heat or wind)	2:24-2:28
Half marathons under your belt	1
Weekly mileage base	25-35
Recent 10K or marathon time (in the bag)	59:27; 4:39
Recent 10K or marathon time (good shot)	1:00; 4:45
Recent 10K or marathon time (still possible)	1:03; 4:56

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



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."



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

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."

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