



Is Your Running Like That Phrase About Lions, Lambs, and the Month of March?

In my youth, growing up north of Chicago, each Spring my mother would remind me of the phrase 'March comes in like a lion and goes out like a lamb'. I spent many an Easter weekend when Easter was in April shoveling snow on the sidewalk in front of my home on Easter Sunday. So much for going out like a lamb.

So, what does this have to do with your running? Many runners start out a race, be it a 5K or a full marathon or something in between "like a lion" by running faster than the average pace needed to achieve their goal finish time, then finish the race "like a lamb" by being reduced to a walking slog pace. Here are my thoughts of how to prevent the fast start and the slow finish.

1. Talk to the others in your corral or around you once you get into the start area. Even if the race does not have corrals that seed you based on your finish times, when you enter the start area, ask those around you what they expect to run for a finish time. If their goals are too rich for you, move about until you find you are in a group of similar abilities. This will put you in a place where other runners can help you and you can help them to achieve your goals. Don't ask just one runner. Ask several to be sure that one runner is not just an overly optimistic one.
2. Join a pace team. Not all races have pace teams but for those that do, the pace team leader's responsibility is to get you to the finish in a certain finish time. These leaders are experienced runners who will keep you from going out too fast or not fast enough. Being in a pace team gets you into a group of runners with the same goal and the group helps everyone in the pace team to achieve their race goals for the day. You are still running on your own, so it is not a sign of weakness that you need others to help you achieve your goal. The running community is a *VERY* social community. We get joy in seeing others achieve their goals and even more joy if we are part of helping make that happen, regardless of what the finish time goal.
3. Use the "Virtual Runner" function on your watch. I know that Garmin brand devices have the function to set up a runner image on your watch where that "runner" is at a particular pace. When you look at the watch face, you don't have to do mental math of your total time on the course or how far you have run, you just need to look at the image on the screen. If you are behind, pick it up. If you are ahead of the runner, maybe you can back off a bit.

Starting at a proper pace can drastically improve your ability to achieve your finish time goal and maybe even beat that goal. And by doing this, you may also help someone else who is pacing off you to achieve their goal. The emotional boost to running well will only help to challenge you to seek a new finish time goal or a goal for a longer race.

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