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Rob: Easy E.

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Rob: Hey everybody and welcome to a special episode of Set the Pace, the official podcast of New York Road Runners, presented by Peloton. I'm your host, Rob Simmelkjaer, the CEO of New York Road Runners, and we are here with a live audience at the Citizens House of Blues in Boston, just two nights ahead of the 2025 129th running of the Boston Marathon presented by Bank of America. Who's running out there? Who's running on Monday? All right, we got runners out here. It's an incredible vibe in Boston this weekend. The weather is spectacular here on Saturday, the day we're taping, and it looks great for Monday as well.

And my usual amazing co-host, Beccy Gentry, is not with us today. She's back in New York tonight, so we have a very special guest host with us tonight. She's a great friend of New York Road Runners, familiar fans to all New York sports fans and sports fans everywhere and especially to fans of the TCS New York City Marathon because she is a regular host of our broadcast there. Not only that, she's running the Boston Marathon on Monday, Sam Ryan. Hey Sam.

00:01:29

Sam: Hey there. So excited to be... Missing Beccy, but so excited to be here with you guys today and this weekend, and wow, the weather. Dare we say, it's two days out. We can say it now. The weather's looking really good.

00:01:42

Rob: It's looking great.

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Sam: We're close, so now we can say it.

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Rob: Great for Monday.

00:01:45

Sam: All week long, I didn't want to say it, but yeah.

00:01:47

Rob: A hundred percent. Thank goodness that the race was not today because here on Saturday, over 80 degrees in Boston. An incredible day to walk around, see the sights, take photos, but luckily a lot cooler on Monday. So how are you feeling about your race on Monday?

00:02:04

Sam: Like those of you who are running, probably a little nervous, trying to get out of my head, but the hay is in the barn as they say, right?

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Rob: That's what they say.

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Sam: So you have to trust your training and I know we have a special guest who will tell us about that too a little later, but I trust the training and I'm excited.

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Rob: All right. Well, we-

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Sam: I'm really looking forward to it.

00:02:23

Rob: You mentioned a special guest, and if you want to know about training for a marathon, there is no person better in the United States or beyond to talk to than our featured guest today. The legendary coach Ed Eyestone is here with us today. Ed is someone who has really become the top distance running coach in the country. He's got a number of elite runners going on Monday and we're going to go deep with Ed on all things marathoning and get psyched for what we think could be some amazing American performances.

So Ed'll be with us in just a minute, but Sam, we do this member moment segment at every New York Road Runners Set the Pace podcast, and so today the member is you. We're going to feature you, Sam, as our member moment. You're not only a great broadcaster but also a New York Road Runners member. So let's talk a little bit about what you're doing and how you're feeling about Monday. I mean, it's actually amazing. You're a four-time Emmy Award winner, a great broadcaster. You sit in our studio broadcasting the marathon in New York. How is it for you to get out there and actually run these races after you've sat and been a part of broadcasting them so many years?

00:03:31

Sam: It's so different now because when I first started broadcasting the New York City Marathon after having set my marathon PB in New York City, so when you cover it, it's like covering the Super Bowl. This is your event. It's like, "Okay, now here I am covering the event that I love, that I run." You feel like you're part of the fabric. But now to go back out and to run a marathon after that, it just feels, I don't want to use the word authentic, but it feels like it's full circle, but now it feels like you can feel what you're speaking to also. So it's a little bit of that all wrapped up into one. I'm not just the runner out there. I can parlay this information into the booth as well, but I take advice from you, from Carrie, from everybody that we work with also, and I listen to them, so now I can apply that to myself.

00:04:27

Rob: It's funny. You've covered so many big sports. You've covered Major League Baseball, the NFL, you've been a part of these big sports, but you haven't been able to play Major League Baseball or play in the NFL. So it's got to be so cool as a broadcaster to go out on the field of play that you've been covering and kind of have that crossover moment. And that's one of the things that's so special about this sport, right, is that we're going to have 30,000 people following these elite runners in Boston on Monday as we do in New York every November.

00:04:58

Sam: You know what? We were just talking about this in the green room before that it's such an individual sport, right? You're running your pace, you're doing your training, but yet there are teammates and there is teamwork. And we've seen this with the pros. We see the teamwork and we see how the running community just bonds together and everybody supports each other. So it is a team sport in that sense too. And there's just so much energy. It's like being part of a team and everybody roots for each other. It's awesome. You guys are awesome.

00:05:31

Rob: It is awesome. We're going to be rooting for everybody out there this Monday. That's one of the things that makes it special. Sam, you were not always into running, and this happens a lot with people. They find a point in life when they like running. When you were a kid, I'm told you would produce a doctor's note to get out of having to run a mile in gym class.

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Sam: It was a legitimate doctor's note.

00:05:53

Rob: Oh, a legitimate doctor's note.

00:05:53

Sam: It was legitimate. Yes, yes.

00:05:55

Rob: What changed for you to get you from there to where you are now running all these marathons?

00:06:00

Sam: So I have asthma and I don't know if anyone else does, but I as a kid, exercise induced asthma. So that was my excuse rather than, "Let's work through it," because it wasn't advisable back then. It's like, "Okay, you have exercise-induced asthma. Don't work out. Don't do anything." When I got a little older, when I was 18, 19, I wanted to get in shape. I wanted to play tennis. I would get winded just running back and forth on the court. And I worked on, "Let me run to the end of my block, let me run to the end of my block and then turn the corner," little by little one step at a time. And that's how we all began, or most of us would begin our running journey if we developed running later in life. So it's just one foot in front of the other, let's see how far we can go. And then I realized I wasn't getting as winded. I didn't need the inhaler. I have pictures from my first New York City Marathon, which was my first marathon, and there's an inhaler on my fuel belt.

00:06:57

Rob: Wow.

00:06:58

Sam: My second one, inhaler in the hand. Never needed it, but it was always in my head and I always thought about, "Well, what if I need it? What if I push too hard? Am I going to need the inhaler?" And I didn't. And I feel that I worked through it and I feel better physically.

00:07:18

Rob: That's a great story. It's one of 30,000 stories that there'll be at the starting line on Monday and there's just so many stories like that in this sport. Everybody has had to overcome something to get to the starting line of an event like the Boston Marathon or the New York Marathon. Every single one of you knows, whether it's you running or

a friend, you know what they've had to overcome, and for you it was that, and here you are. It must feel amazing.

00:07:43

Sam: It does. It does. I just want to keep going.

00:07:45

Rob: Absolutely.

00:07:46

Sam: We all do, right?

00:07:47

Rob: Speaking of keeping going, you have a goal of running a thousand miles a year. Is that right? You're trying to do a thousand a year?

00:07:55

Sam: Well, yeah.

00:07:55

Rob: That's not so crazy.

00:07:59

Sam: (inaudible) crazy.

00:07:59

Rob: Have you done a thousand in the last couple of years?

00:08:02

Sam: The last two years I hadn't, but prior to that I did. This year I will make it.

00:08:07

Rob: Yeah.

00:08:08

Sam: Yeah. We are in a marathon training cycle.

00:08:09

Rob: It's true. You can do that pretty quickly. Where are you trying to get to in your marathon goals? Do you have a time you're trying to achieve in Boston or what are you trying to do?

00:08:17

Sam: I do have a time because I've run this before and the last time I ran it, it didn't go... It wasn't pretty. So I want to finish and finish proud and just happy, and I want to prove that the training that I did and the dedication

that I put into this over the past year has paid off and that it worked, so let's see. Let's see where it goes.

00:08:47

Rob: Well, we wish you luck on Monday. It's going to be exciting for you. Hope to welcome you back to New York with Boston Marathon under your belt. And you think you'll be able to take some things from this to the marathon broadcast in the fall in New York?

00:09:04

Sam: Absolutely. Absolutely.

00:09:05

Rob: We can't wait.

00:09:05

Sam: And just being part of this community, it's so uplifting. So you guys are awesome. You guys are rock stars.

00:09:12

Rob: All right. Well, speaking of rock stars, there are going to be some incredible rock stars wearing the USA stars and stripes on Monday. Ed Eyestone, no one knows more about how to prepare for a marathon than our guest, so let's bring Ed Eyestone up and introduce this incredible coach.

00:09:32

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Rob: For those who don't know Coach Eyestone, I think we call you... What can we call you? Coach Ed? Coach Eyestone?

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Ed: My guys called me Easy E.

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Rob: Easy E.

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Ed: I don't know that it's due to my rapping ability. I think it's just because a kind of easygoing guy.

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Rob: Not the original Easy E. I love it.

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Ed: Our sport is difficult enough to not have a dictator as a coach and having been there in their position, I want to be able to work with them. I mean, I am demanding, and I'm sure you've talked to Conner and Clayton, the kind of workouts that they do, but it's kind of flattering actually, Easy E. But you can call me Ed. That's fine.

00:10:50

Rob: We're sticking with Easy E. I love it.

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Sam: Easy E is good. Yeah.

00:10:53

Rob: So for those who don't know, Coach Eyestone, Ed Eyestone is a two-time Olympian himself. He is a former NCAA champion and a legendary coach whose athletes include Conner Mantz, Clayton Young and Keira D'Amato, who all will be towing the starting line on Monday, and they are really leading a resurgence in American distance running. He's the head coach in cross-country and track and field at BYU, one of the most consistent collegiate programs in the country over the years, and talking about how calm he is, steady leadership has really made that a program that's on the map now for all runners, and he's a broadcaster just like you, Sam. You guys actually have been together I think as broadcasters. You've connected with some of your runners through broadcasting, which we'll talk about as well. So he's done it all and it's great to have you here.

00:11:42

Ed: Well, thank you. Appreciate that, and probably a little bit of hyperbole there in that intro, but I appreciate it. It's been fun. And this is a sport that, like many of you, I started back in junior high when I got cut from the baseball team, of course. If my real dreams had have come to fruition, I'd be next door at Fenway Park. But when I did get that cut, it was the first time that I realized in the spring of the year, sure you have baseball, but there's another sport actually in the spring. It's called track and field. And so that's how I got my gentle introduction into the sport.

And so like many of you, I've been involved in this for the last 50 plus years and it's been fun. I was able to run through college and then had a pretty long-lasting professional career. When I was nearly 40 actually as I was slowing down and the competition was getting faster, a good coach in the area offered me a position just to get my foot in the door of coaching. And so I went and worked at a place called Weber State University up in Ogden, Utah for about two and a half years.

And then as that cycled down, my old track and cross-country coach at BYU was then retiring and I was able to move in. And so for the last 25 years, I've been working at the D1 level, and over the last 10 years or so, we've had athletes emerge who were running at a high enough level that they were going to be able to run professionally. And so it's kind of fun. My day job obviously is a track and field and cross-country coach at BYU. We won a national championship this last year.

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Rob: Congratulations.

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Sam: Awesome.

00:13:20

Ed: Humble brag right there, humble brag, but it doesn't happen often so I work it into conversations as often as I can. But that may be my day job, but I'm just as passionate obviously about my professional athletes that I get to work with and it's so cool.

00:13:39

Sam: Before we get to Conner and Clayton and Kiera, you talked about your career, and I know this sounds like a broad question, but we know that running, in the running community, running, there's a boom in popularity in all distances, not just the marathon, but what is the biggest difference that you see not only in the performance and the athletes, but in the training, in the equipment, in the shoes and in the coaching from when you ran-

00:14:08

Ed: From the dark ages, you're saying?

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Sam: ... to today?

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Ed: So from the dark ages?

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Sam: Yeah. Well, Easy E.

00:14:12

Ed: When all the pictures were in black and white. My guys are going, "Was color not invented when you were running?" It's interesting because I think some of the same go-to workouts that my guys love and thrive in were similar workouts that I was doing in the '80s and '90s. So some of that has been consistent, but there are always new innovations, and a good coach is going to plagiarize with the best of them. We're in a wonderful opportunity now in terms of the internet. The internet's not only great for learning a guitar song or something, but also fantastic in terms of pulling up some good workouts and seeing what people around the country and around the world are doing.

So I think we've all appreciated for this sharing of information that's out there, things like double threshold workouts, and obviously the equipment and the stadiums that we're running in I think are more athlete friendly now as well. And so all of those things I think are coming together and as a result of that, we're just seeing a perfect storm of speed and that's why the records have just gone through the roof in terms of across all events really, and it's going to be interesting to see what the future holds.

00:15:29

Rob: And you were kind of a perfect storm of speed yourself when you were a runner. I mean, you haven't bragged that much about your running days, but you really were elite. You won something called the triple crown of distance running, which I think only four or five people have ever done, the national championship in cross country in the 5,000 meters and in the 10,000 meters, which is an incredible accomplishment. What did you take from those days of running at that level that you've been able to really bring into your coaching career?

00:15:59

Ed: Well, if you were to ask my guys, they would probably say one thing that Coach Eyestone likes or Easy E likes is consistency. And I felt like over the course of my career, even dating back to high school and college, I was someone who my coaches pretty much knew they were going to put me in and even if it was an event that I wasn't that comfortable with, a 1500 or something like that, that I was going to give it my best possible performance. Didn't mean that I was going to win every race, but I was going to be

consistent.

When people come to me and ask, "Okay, what's the perfect workout? What do I need to do?" It's just the consistency and I came up with kind of a corny equation because I was anything but a math major, but it's $C^2 = E^2$, which is just consistent competence equals eventual excellence. So you don't have to hit a home run every time you're up to bat. You can tell I'm a frustrated baseball player, right? But we just need to get out there and do our best on a consistent basis. And if we do that day in, day out, week in, week out, month in, month out, year in, year out, then ultimately I think we're going to have an opportunity to, if not achieve greatness, at least come close to our running potential.

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Sam: That is awesome. So when you take that philosophy and that mentality from your training and parlay that to coaching, when some athletes join you later, Kiera for example, how difficult is it to or receptive are they to your philosophy and your message?

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Ed: Well, I think anytime I take in someone who... I've been fortunate because I've had a number of athletes come through the BYU system, and so they've literally been with me since their senior year in high school and so by the time they get through in four or five years, they kind of know the system, and obviously it's going to be tweaked as they move up to the marathon from maybe the five and 10,000 meters, but I've also worked with people who went to other programs and then came in.

First thing you do as a coach is just sit down with person and you kind of see what their goals are. I was in at the Bryan Clay Meet in Los Angeles for the last four days with my college team. So this morning I got up early and caught a nonstop, got in about two hours ago. The guy that I was sitting next to obviously looked like a runner. We struck up a conversation and the first thing I asked him is, "What is your goal? What would make you happy in terms of running Boston?" And he said, "Well, work's been a grind lately. I haven't been able to get the miles in." So I said, "Well, obviously you have realistic expectations going in." He wasn't expecting to run a PR, but he wanted to get the very best performance out of his training that he had done.

So to answer your question, Sam, anytime that I take on a new client or athlete that I'm going to work with, we're going to have a conversation about where you're at, what you've done in the past, what's some of the good things

that you'd like to carry forward that you think are going to be effective, and then hey, maybe we can implement some of these things that have proven effective with myself back in the dark ages or with some of the athletes that I'm currently working with to kind of tweak things.

And some of it also is just coming to altitude, like Keira D'Amato. When she came out, she'd never been at altitude. Here we have the American record holder at the time, or previous to that anyway, in the marathon, she'd never really had any extended training at altitude. And I said, "You know what? That's kind of a thing. Let's experiment with that. Let's come out to altitude."

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Rob: It works for Kenyans and Ethiopians and lots of other stuff.

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Ed: I think really if you look worldwide, if you see the people in the Olympic Games, I would say the vast, vast, vast majority, almost without exception, not necessarily live full-time at altitude, but have an altitude training component that they will step up to for at least four to six weeks.

00:19:54

Rob: That community that you have created out there in Utah is incredible now and it really has become... There's been Flagstaff, Arizona, there's been Boulder, Colorado over the years for American distance running, but I don't know that there's ever been anything quite like what you have going on between the incredible program you've got at BYU and now this professional running scene. And I had a chance to go visit out there this past February. A guy named Todd Garner, who's a friend of yours and a friend of Road Runners, hosted me and my daughter out there. I had a chance to have dinner with Clayton and Conner and their wives and this whole crew out there and they are all hitting the roads Saturday morning, long runs, pushing each other. They got vehicle support, and it's a team that you guys have out there. What has allowed this Utah kind of cluster to become what it has become in distance running?

00:20:49

Ed: Yeah. I mean, I think there are various things that have contributed to the growth, one, at BYU on both the men's and women's. Let me brag about our women for a minute because they won a national championship on the women's side at cross-country this year and I think it was the first time at about 20 years that the men's and women's program had

won simultaneously in the same year. Coach Diljeet Taylor is doing a phenomenal job with our women there. She's also part of the Nike kind of hub system that they've established there. So she's got some very, very talented professional athletes as well. So I think it's a combination of having some really good athletes that have graduated from the system and have stuck around because of (inaudible) success. And then a lot of people, Utah is... They call it, what do they call it, Little Silicon Slopes a little bit, a lot of big tech industry coming in there.

So we just have a lot of really good people moving in from out of state who love running. And as we know, running is a wonderful community and people like Todd Garner who's been very generous, very supportive, have also stepped up, and as a result on any given Saturday long run, yes, we'll have Conner and Clayton and Kiera that are leading the charge in the men's pack and the women's pack, but we'll have 40 plus people show up, some of whom are three hour plus marathoners, but they know, "Okay, this is a place where we're going to meet and there's going to be some support and some camaraderie and all of those good things." When you get... There's a certain amount of synergy that comes when you have good people training together and also maybe not hanging with you in the workouts, but just supportive and know who your name is and know what your name is and how to support you, good things are going to happen.

We've also had an interesting development with the state legislature, a program called REP, which has done some state dollars donating towards the development of distance running in the state, so kind of as a safety net for those college kids who come out because not everybody is running well enough out of college to garner a shoe contract, which is kind of the bread and butter of professional athletes, right? You got to be able to have something to pay the rent, right? And the vast majority of kids out of college are not at that level, but with some support, with some maintenance, and it doesn't take a lot, sometimes it's just a matter of having an insurance program, health insurance or access to PTs or athletic trainers, as a result of those monies that have been invested by the state, we've seen I think a rise as well.

00:23:17

Sam: It's interesting. One thing that you just said that I want to go back to, you said not everybody is running well enough out of college, the development of the runner and the distance runner. Can we talk about the maturation and how long does that really take after college?

00:23:33

Ed: Yeah. Well, I was having a conversation with somebody the other day because if you follow the sport, you probably were aware that a couple weeks ago at the LA Marathon, all of a sudden we had this college kid, I think in his first year out of college, post-collegiately. He was a two-time All-American, but he was not a name that you would really know unless you were in the conference. Went out and on his debut ran 207, okay? So Rickman is his name and I'm drawing a blank on his first name, but... Did somebody... Matt. Okay, thank you. I always get... Dorian, when I'm working in Chicago, she's the one-

00:24:09

Rob: Dorian Cale with the assist from the first row. Yeah.

00:24:11

Ed: Yes.

00:24:12

Rob: (inaudible) .

00:24:12

Ed: Dorian is the one slipping me notes saying, "Okay, you're mispronouncing"-

00:24:16

Sam: You guys can cheer for Dorian.

00:24:17

Ed: "You're mispronouncing that guy's name, you dummy. You gotta say it right." You need brains behind the whatever sometimes, and we appreciate Dorian. But yeah, so here's a guy who it would be easy just to say, "Okay, ran D1 college, two time All-American. It's time to move on. I got a day job," or whatever, but he's continued and he gave himself a shot. He trained and he went into his marathon and his debut ran sub 208, okay?

So my conversation with the team was, "Hey guys, I think you owe it to yourselves, if it's a desire of yours"... I'm not going to push it. I am Easy E, right? I'm not going to push this goal onto them, but they should probably have as a goal at some point in time post-collegiately to go run a marathon. Let's see, because we definitely have some people that are adapters that are much better at the marathon than they would be even at the 5,000, 10,000. There's a pretty good correlation between 10K success and marathon success, but it's not a one-to-one correlation by any means. And sometimes you'll have people who are so-so at the 10,000 meters, but because of their efficiency in

running and their fueling ability or the way their body spares fuel when they run, they can really make a step-up. So I think really most runners, especially, again, D1 or whatever, college runners, probably owe it to themselves that, "Hey, let's give this marathon thing a shot."

00:25:47

Rob: And I was in Orlando a year and change ago for the US Olympic trials and saw the incredible moment that two of your runners, Clayton and Conner had, and now here we are past the Olympics where they also had an incredible day. I was in Paris to watch them both cross the finish line in the top 10, and the strength from the two of them just continues to build.

So looking ahead to Monday, I'd love to get inside your conversations with both Clayton and Conner getting ready for this race on Monday. How are you talking to them about the way this race might play out and the expectations that both of them have in terms of what they can do? Clayton has been running strong, Conner just coming off of a American record in the half. A lot of people right now are talking about him as someone who could be podium or better, so different conversations, I'm sure. Let's start with Clayton and how you think he can approach this race on Monday. What looks like a good race for him?

00:26:48

Ed: Yeah. Well, I think Clayton, and many of you are probably following along. We often have a documentarian at every workout. For those of you who are on YouTube and follow Clayton Young, he's got a series that's very, very well done and I think it gives you a little bit of an inside peek of the psyche of elite marathoners and what they're going through and whatnot. And we had an excellent build going into Paris I felt and a pretty good build going into New York.

This build, and when I say build, it's usually kind of a 16-week program that we follow, this week or this build coming into Boston, when we're training for spring marathons in Utah, it can be a little dicey, right? Because we're in the winter. People fly out to Utah to ski in the winter time. They don't come out to train for marathons. So sometimes it can be a little hit-and-miss because of the weather. But Clayton's had a really nice build and I think he gauges somewhat where he's at relative to his proximity to his training partner, Conner Mantz, because Conner's just famous for going out and just hammering every workout. And I'll give him, "Okay, let's try to hit around 418 on these mile repeats," and Conner will roll in at 412 and it's like, "Conner, that's a little fast there." And Clayton's going, "

Conner, that's really fast." They get along really well, but sometimes they're like an old married couple because inevitably Conner is driving the workout pretty fast and Clayton's holding on with his fingernails.

But he's come into this, as you alluded to Conner Mantz coming into this 16-week cycle. I like to schedule races periodically because I think having races during your marathon build, I think there's a couple of good things that come about as a result of that. One, you avoid the what I call all your eggs in one basket syndrome where you're just training for six months and it's one race and then you get a cramp or something and it's like, "Oh crud, what do I have to show for my six months?" So I like to have a couple of races in there so they can go and have other races and try to get PRs or just see where they're at. I think it's a good checkpoint to see where am I in my training, at least in the shorter distances, and that can really instill some confidence.

And I think it also forces them for about a week as they go into this to taper down just a little bit, because sometimes they'll be hammering out anywhere from 115 to 125 miles a week and it's nice to have a half-marathon or in Conner and Clayton's case, two half-marathons over this 16-week build where they were able to actually bring the mileage down a little bit because if they're going to run a race, I want them to go into it fresh enough that they're going to be able to perform to the best of their ability.

And so in Conner's case, he got the American record in Houston and had an amazing race and it was a pretty windy day. It was not ideal conditions. And then he followed that up about I think five weeks ago at the New York City half, which I think you were there, Sam, weren't you, covering it?

00:29:45

Rob: Yep.

00:29:48

Ed: And he ran even faster there. Because of the logistics of that course, it's not eligible for American record purposes because it's point to point, but had another really good... Ran faster on what I consider a hillier and more difficult course than Houston.

00:30:01

Rob: Definitely.

00:30:02

Ed: So those were really good checkpoints for Conner Mantz. Now, Clayton went into... ran Houston. Ran solid, not amazing. I think we all thought he'd run closer to one hour

flat and he was one hour and 50s or something like that. So he came away from it a little scratching his head going, "I think I just made some tactical decisions." It was a windy day. He didn't go with the leaders, so he got kind of no man's land. So we go, "Okay, we'll work on tactics on that." And then he ran the Atlanta half, which was the US half-marathon championships and really just had an off day. His back tightened and his lower kind of hamstring chain.

And that's the other thing that happens. I think when we schedule races during a build, sometimes we can identify maybe some weaknesses in where we're at. And so I think that was a really good opportunity for the last... That was about seven, eight weeks ago. He's had a chance to meet with his PTs, do some strength and conditioning with our strength and conditioning coach a little bit, all to the workouts, and for the last four or five weeks, he's been back running closer to Conner, so actually closing the gap a little bit.

And so much of the sport, if it can't be seamless, which rarely is it, then it's all about momentum, and he's hitting momentum. He's hitting at the right time. So I'm hoping in Clayton's case that we can ride this momentum to a really good performance, and by good performance, with this field that they've put together, I think Conner and Clayton, although they're 207 high and 208 flat PRs, I think they're the 16th and 17th best times coming in, okay? So that can have you scratching your head and going, "Do they even have a chance?"

But what I take solace in is that head to head in strategic non-paced races, the Olympic Games, they've been beating 204 guys consistently. So that's what we're hoping for. We're hoping that it's just a grinder and that they can do their strength and it's not going to be (inaudible). We saw Lima last year just take it out and fly. Got a big minute and a half lead I think at one point in time, and that may happen again, but I would think that Conner, you're going to see him running with the lead pack, even if they do go a little bit breakneck at the start, and I don't think Clayton's going to be too far behind.

They're both engineers by training. They both graduated in engineering, and so it's fun to see their technical approach to it. Talking to Conner just a couple days ago, we had said, "Okay." I gave him a homework assignment and said, "Let's look at the last 10 years. Let's look at the first half, second half of Boston. Let's do a little analytics and see what's up." And the takeaway that he came into my office with, he said, "Coach, what I've noticed is that whoever can run 103 for the second half is going to be in position or the winner I think in the last 10 years on the

men's side to run 103 for the second half. I think I can do that."

So it's how they get to that second half is the thing that will help determine a lot of things. But I think if we see kind of how it is sometimes, even though it's downhill, sometimes it can be kind of a pack run. Nobody really wants to take it. No one wants to be the sacrificial lamb out front. I think if they get to half at a not 61 pace, but more like 62 or 63, then I think Conner is going to have a great shot, and I think that's also the best game plan for Clayton.

00:33:31

Sam: I am so in awe with the technical side of it and the numbers and the crunching numbers in your head while this is transpiring, but when you talk about the momentum and sprinkling those races in, and especially what we saw Conner do, how much of this... There's technical, there's experience, but then how much of this is confidence also? How much of this is a confidence build, especially coming off Houston and the NYC half?

00:34:00

Ed: Yeah. Well, I think Conner, in fact, I was in LA with my college team, so I missed the press conference, but I listened to all the various things, and what came away for me was him, Conner Mantz, reiterating how confident he is going into this and the fact that it took... So this will be his seventh marathon and I think Clayton's as well, and his second marathon was two years ago here. So he had run Chicago, run well there and then came into this and he just put himself in it because that's the way he loves to do it. He just followed every move and he went out really probably too hard for his experiential level at the time, and then he really suffered at the end and I think faded to... I think he ended up 10th or 11th place.

And he said, "That really shook me. That really shook me, because it was like this is the first time when I was blacking out," something that we've all experienced ourselves if we've run enough marathons where you're kind of seeing stars, and he wasn't used to that because he was really a track guy who was just moving up. And so I think he learned and he had some good takeaways from that, so that experiential factor comes into play. And the fact that he's done so well in the last four marathons that he's run, and if you go through the marathons that these guys have run, really, they ran Chicago two years ago. To get their qualifying mark, they had to run under 208 to get the world standard. Then they followed up with the Olympic trials where they went one, two, then they followed that up with Paris where they

went eight, nine.

00:35:34

Rob: Eight, nine.

00:35:35

Ed: Eight, nine. Yep. And then they followed that up with New York, where they went seven, eight. Okay, and that's the amazing thing. I mean, I've seen larger gaps between Conner and Clayton when they're doing mile repeats than if you look at the average. I think the average of those six marathons has been about 16 seconds.

00:35:54

Rob: It's incredible.

00:35:55

Ed: They each have their own way to get where they're at. Conner has to just hammer, hammer, hammer. Clayton is holding on for life and often his back, but he's still pushing it pretty well as well. But success breeds success, Sam, to answer your question. And I think that the success that they've had, particularly over the last four or so marathons, is going to make them less conservative and more, "Hey, let's swing for the fences." This is Boston, after all.

00:36:22

Rob: All right, Easy E, let's talk about your newest female pupil, Kiera D'Amato, who obviously is an elite American runner. Let's talk about the move that she made last summer. She made the decision to come out to Utah. She's not from Utah. She made a decision to come there. It was a family decision. She had to work with her husband and they've got kids, and this was a really big commitment she made to come train with you and this group that you've got out there in Utah. Can you talk about what led up to that decision? I mean, I know you guys had worked together in the broadcast booth in Chicago. You got to know each other there. What were the conversations and what was the ultimate conversation when she said, "Coach, I still want to come out and run with you"?

00:37:06

Ed: Yeah. I mean, I think it's like anything. Before you make that first phone call, you kind of vet people and individuals. I had some really good experiences working with Jared Ward as his coach, and I think Jared and Kiera were probably... She knew him quite well from their world championships and just the elite circuit so to speak, and so I think she was kind of trying to find out what kind of system we were operating

under.

And it's an interesting system because back in my days I felt like... And I was following in the footsteps of all American and Olympians like Henry Marsh, Doug Padilla, Paul Cummings. I saw that they were doing in six days what a lot of people were doing in seven days. And so I said, "Kiera, we'd like to just do it in six days and then I'd like to give you a day off and I'd love to have you just kind of chill that day and just let your body just soak in recovery during that day." And I think it's not unusual to have runners occasionally take a day off, but one out of seven, it doesn't happen a whole lot. But I think she understood and she said, "Ed, I'm all in. I'm all in. You tell me what to do and I'm up for it," which the coach loves to hear, and obviously she's had great experience. I wanted to do what had worked for her in the past. And also, I think the altitude component was an important one for her to check out.

And so she came in I think early in the summer and we had a wonderful build. And as things happen, sometimes you have a wonderful build and the week before all of a sudden there's a little something going on in the foot, and so she ended up not performing in Chicago, ended up DNFing from there. And then it was a matter of, "Okay, let's figure out what we got going on here. Let's get you healthy." And so she cross-trained for... There's cross-training where you just get on the exercise bike and you just kind of pedal a little bit, and then there's cross-training where there's a pool of sweat underneath you when you finish, and that's the kind that she was doing. But we have had a great kind of 12 weeks where she's been running on ground, looking good, and I'm very excited for her prospects as well. She'd be the first to admit, she's turned 40 now, so she's a master. I think that offers some excellent incentivizing as well to be the very best master that you can be.

00:39:40

Rob: What's it been like for the other young women you've got in that program out there in Utah to run with the Kiera D'Amano? What has that meant for them? An idol for all of them, I'm sure, and really someone for them to learn from.

00:39:54

Ed: Well, like I say, that Saturday long run, there's a lot more people showing up and a lot more women showing up than there used to be. Courtney Frerichs, who's an Olympic silver medalist in the steeplechase from 2021, suffered a really major knee injury last year. And then I got a call from her coach in the fall saying, "Hey"... I mean, not her coach,

but her agent saying, " Hey, she'd like to come out to Utah. She's heard good things about it," and it's been fun having her in the system and it's fun to see a marathoner and a steeplechaser working together, and there's a lot of workouts that cross over very well for the two of them to work together.

So it been great. It's been encouraging. It's awesome for the whole running community in the area to see these Olympians and American record holders there training and they go, " You know what? These are not just fast runners, but they're really, really cool people." And I think that's what I'm most proud about is it's a very good group. It's non-competitive in terms of... I mean, everyone is building one another and sometimes that's difficult at the highest level. I'm sure you've experienced that in broadcasting or wherever, what line of work you're in. Sometimes it's like there's that, what is that, schadenfreude, where you're almost wanting them to fail. But what I love about our group and our system right now is there's a lot of building and celebration when somebody in the group runs well.

00:41:18

Sam: When you talk about Keira, and this is someone who wasn't running competitively for a brief time and now you talked about the build to Chicago and then what happened there, but now the rebuild for Boston, what has impressed you the most since she's been with you?

00:41:34

Ed: Yeah. I think it's just her determination and just contagious positivity. That's who she is. And if you have the chance to talk to her, I've never heard her say one negative thing, and that's contagious. The flip side of that can be contagious too, and it can be kind of terminal sometimes. But to have such a positive person come into the group. I think that's the number one thing. And I think that's the thing that once she had taken that several year break to actually just start a family and pursue a professional career and all of that, I think that's the thing that got her back. She didn't initially start back up after that multiple year layoff saying, " I'm going to get the American record." It's like, " Hey, I'm going to run this marathon and I'm going to see how I do." And then all of a sudden the times were coming off by the tens of minutes and she set the American record.

00:42:30

Rob: Well, coach Eyestone, you're a baseball fan. I'm a baseball fan. We're sitting here feet from Fenway Park hearing the cheers from the audience and the crowd over

there with a game going on. But running's been pretty good to you, hasn't it? So it's been a pretty good run, if you will.

00:42:45

Ed: Well-

00:42:46

Rob: Where do you think it goes from here?

00:42:47

Sam: Pun intended.

00:42:48

Ed: Yeah. Yeah. You know what? I had a high school reunion. It wasn't the 50, no, but I think it was, we'll call it the 25-year reunion. It was more than that, but it was this last summer we had a high school reunion, and since we had had a really fun experience at the Olympic Games, and we didn't talk about Kenneth Rooks, who got the silver medal in the steeplechase, which was for me the race of the games, but of course because I'm his coach, but they had me do a little spiel on the Olympics and what Paris was like and my experience, and I've been to probably six or seven Olympic Games as either an athlete or a coach or a broadcaster. And I thought that Paris just was phenomenal the way they put things together, but yeah, and I don't know where I was going with that.

00:43:35

Rob: It's been fun. You've had a great, great time-

00:43:37

Ed: It's been good. It's been great.

00:43:37

Rob: ... and you're doing amazing things.

00:43:39

Sam: I just have one more question. Obviously, most runners feel some kind of jitters the night before a race, the night before a marathon or anxiety, something. It means we're human and we don't know how it's going to go. We have a plan. What do you feel?

00:44:00

Ed: Yeah. As a coach, I think I'd like to be able to channel all the nerves that my athletes have and say, "Let me take this on for you guys." But there is a certain amount of butterflies that you want to have as an athlete. But I

think if they can be reminded that it's enjoy the process, don't be so out... If you go in and say, "I've got to run 204," that just puts a lot of pressure on you. So instead, if you can enjoy the process, make sure you're getting your water bottles, going, "Okay, I feel comfortable in this pack, I'm going to position myself." And if you're enjoying the process and just each mile along the way, then lo and behold, a couple hours go by and you're crossing the finish line. And I think that's a really good way to kind of embrace those nerves and get you your best performance.

00:44:46

Rob: Coach Eyestone, I can't wait to see what your runners do on Monday. I'm sure you can't either.

00:44:51

Ed: I'm excited.

00:44:51

Sam: I'm so excited, yeah.

00:44:52

Ed: I'm excited. I'm getting nervous here.

00:44:55

Rob: Because it's more nerve wracking when you're the one coaching and not running, I know. So get ready. Get ready. Get some rest.

00:45:02

Ed: I'm ready.

00:45:03

Rob: And we wish you all the best on Monday.

00:45:05

Ed: I appreciate it.

00:45:06

Rob: And for your whole team, all your runners, for you, continued success. Thanks so much for being with us. Appreciate it. Great having you here.

00:45:12

Ed: Thank you. Thanks guys.

00:45:13

Rob: Ed Eyestone, Coach Ed Eyestone. Easy E-

00:45:19

Sam: Easy E, that's right.

00:45:20

Rob: ... here in the House of Blues where he belongs as he gets ready for the 129th Boston Marathon on Monday. Well, usually this is the point in the show where we go to Meb Keflezighi. He does a little Meb Minute for us, Sam, but Meb's a little busy. He's here in Boston, but he's actually going to be broadcasting the race for ESPN on Monday, which we can't wait to see. He's been so great in the broadcast business. Can't wait to watch Meb.

00:45:48

Sam: He was at the 5K today.

00:45:49

Rob: Yes, exactly. Meb is a legend obviously here in Boston with his win here. You can't walk around with him without people stopping him on the street. So he's busy getting ready for his broadcast. But instead, we've got actually some great advice for our runners, from Lauren Thomas, who is a performance dietitian from Morton. Morton, of course, is our partner at New York Road Runners, the company behind all the great fuels that so many of the runners are using right now, the gels and the drinks and all of that. And so Lauren, thanks for coming up and talking fueling with us a little bit.

00:46:20

Lauren: Thank you.

00:46:21

Rob: How are you doing?

00:46:21

Lauren: Excited to be here.

00:46:24

Sam: So we know Morton will be along the course, and I've tried it, so I know you're not supposed to try something new on Marathon Day, so once I saw that, I tried it. Love it.

00:46:34

Rob: So you tried it two days before marathon day. Much better. Are you going to use it? What do you think?

00:46:35

Sam: Absolutely.

00:46:35

Rob: All right. She's in.

00:46:39

Sam: Absolutely. Absolutely. Tell us about what runners can expect. I mean, obviously most of us have tried it, but what makes this effective and helpful?

00:46:53

Lauren: Yeah, absolutely. Super excited to be on course at Boston and of course New York as well, but the Morton gel is going to be easy to digest. The idea is that it disappears from the stomach, right? So it's giving quick carbohydrate to the muscles to get the energy that the athlete needs and then moving through the body. So the hope is that the athletes can really just get that energy and move on with their run.

00:47:21

Rob: I started using Morton myself about a year ago. I ran Berlin with Morton in Tokyo. In Tokyo, I found it was really helpful. I bought a couple days before the race the race pack that you guys put together that has a mix for drinks, right, so drink a certain amount the day before, a certain amount the morning of the race, and then it gave you the gels, I think it was five gels to use exactly every, I forget, a certain number of kilometers I think. So it gave you a plan of exactly what to do, which for someone like me, I really needed because I had never quite gotten the fueling thing. So can you talk about that aspect of having a fueling plan for runners and how you guys can help them do that?

00:48:02

Lauren: Yeah, absolutely. So the idea is to think about nutrition just like you would your training and have a plan that you're following and that you're training your stomach just like you would train your muscles. So the idea is you're arriving at marathon day and you have exactly what you're going to be doing for your fueling standpoint done and completely confident in it.

So our idea from the nutrition team was, "Hey, can we educate the runners on, "Hey, not just during the race, but what are you doing before the race? What are you doing the night before the race?" And then recommend the carbohydrates that we see in the research really make a big difference and guide that for the runner throughout their journey to make sure that they can show up at mile 13 still feeling really good because they've already fueled from the very beginning. That's the goal, right? Fueling from the start of

the race.

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Rob: Yeah. Once you start to feel bad.

00:48:55

Lauren: It's too late.

00:48:55

Rob: It's too late.

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Sam: It's too late.

00:48:57

Rob: The fuel is not going to give you what you need.

00:48:59

Sam: And so important during the buildup and during the training. How important is it early on just to try what works and really implement a plan?

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Lauren: It's so important. It's so important. And everybody is so individual with what they're going to like, what they're going to tolerate at first, and you have to try things over and over to figure out what your plan is going to be, and then you have full trust in that. So the Morton is based off of being able to tolerate, really easy on the stomach and be able to, again, give those athletes those higher amounts of carbs that we see the elites pushing because all of us are going to benefit from more carbohydrate availability.

00:49:44

Rob: What do you think is the best strategy with the caffeinated gel? I tried... I think I used one of them right at the start in Tokyo. It gave me that little burst, which was useful. Where do you recommend, for those who use caffeine, people try those, and what's the best strategy with them?

00:50:04

Lauren: Yeah, caffeine is so individual with tolerance, but those of us who are daily coffee drinkers and certainly familiar with caffeine, I would recommend have one at the start on the starting line 10 minutes prior to go time, and then integrate one maybe at the halfway. And that way you know that caffeine can take a while to hit peak in your bloodstream, so you're giving it some time, getting the

caffeine along with the carbohydrate, and then getting another burst later. So we're not going all six caffeine gels, we're not going all six non caffeine gels, but maybe all alternating and sticking one midway can be a helpful way to approach that.

00:50:47

Sam: Most of us aren't elite athletes. There are elites out there who they fuel a different way and they train differently than someone like me. But how much can we take from that and can we learn from their buildup and their fueling? How effective can that be for the everyday runner?

00:51:09

Lauren: Yeah, and I think Morton is very athlete first, and we learn just as much from our runners and our elites as we do from our everyday runner, you and me. And I think what we can learn is that fueling is only the beginning of being able to understand how your body works. So how can we make sure that an athlete is pushing those limits that they thought they maybe weren't even realizing was the limit?

So I think a lot of times I'll hear athletes say, "I didn't know I could feel this good at the end of a race." And that's where fueling really comes in. "Well, I was taking a gel every hour. I thought that was fine." And sure it is, but what if you increase that and can you get to that last 5K feeling strong? That's going to be a whole different end of the race than it would otherwise. So I think we can learn a lot from these athletes who are pushing very, very high carbohydrate amounts during the race.

00:52:07

Rob: All right. Well Lauren, I think we should give away a little Morton right here. We got a crowd here, so I want everybody out there to take a look under your chair. And if it's not your chair, you can even look. It's right up underneath the chair, right? And there are some Morton, I think some water bottles there maybe. Somebody got one. I hear somebody pull... There we go. There's one.

00:52:29

Sam: Awesome.

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Rob: If you've got a Morton water bottle, we've got a pack of Morton gels right here for you, so you can come up and grab them. This is the Morton Marathon collection, seven gels, two drinks. Actually, yeah, four drinks.

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Sam: Oh, this is like what you had.

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Rob: This is very similar. There's a water bottle in the pack as well.

00:52:47

Sam: That's awesome.

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Rob: I love this because it just plans it all out for you. You don't have to think, and it's really great. You guys are doing a great job. I see Morton gel, it's just everywhere now. You see it on the ground sometimes when you're running for those who missed the trash basket. We wanted them to hit the trash basket, but still, you see a lot of them on the ground. You see them everywhere. So the runners are really responding to what you guys are doing.

00:53:11

Lauren: That's awesome. Glad to hear.

00:53:13

Sam: One more question from me. For pre-race, do you recommend taking the Morton gel before you start or do you wait until a certain mileage? I know it's one size fits all, but do you pre-race fuel?

00:53:32

Lauren: I do recommend a gel 10 minutes before the start, especially a long morning like Boston or New York or any of these major marathons that you might be waiting around more. It's been a while since breakfast. Not only do you probably have to have a second breakfast, but you want to start that first 5K feeling strong. We don't want to dip into the reserves at the very beginning, right? So can we start fueled from before the start line and then again at the 5K mark or whatever your plan might be? But yeah, early and often is my motto.

00:54:04

Rob: All right. Well, thank you Lauren. Good luck to everybody out there using Morton on Monday. Appreciate having you here. And Sam, it's going to be a really fun couple of days in Boston. There's nothing like being in Boston for the Boston Marathon. The city-

00:54:20

Sam: The energy-

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Rob: ... is on fire.

00:54:21

Sam: ... is so great. There was '80s music playing at the finish line today. Did you hear it?

00:54:26

Rob: A hundred percent.

00:54:27

Sam: Oh, come on. They were playing New Order.

00:54:28

Rob: They've got a great DJ.

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Sam: It was great. It was awesome.

00:54:31

Rob: The finish line on Boylston Street has been on fire all week. There's just something about this city this week, especially when the weather's good. The Red Sox are playing. People are here from all over the world. The city is just absolutely at its best. The cherry blossoms are in bloom. So if you don't love Boston this weekend, you can't love Boston because this is an absolutely gorgeous weekend. I just think the energy of the runners is what it's all about. So to you, Sam, and to everybody else out there running, good luck.

00:55:02

Sam: Thank you.

00:55:03

Rob: It should be amazing.

00:55:03

Sam: And good luck to all of you guys. So excited for everybody here. It's going to be great.

00:55:10

Rob: Thank you so much, Sam, for being with us. Thank you to Ed Eyestone, to Lauren Thomas, and we just love... We're New Yorkers, but we love coming to Boston for the Boston Marathon. We love hosting our members here. Thanks again to House of Blues, Citizens House of Blues for hosting us. Good luck everybody. We will see you next week on Set the Pace. Have a great 129th Boston Marathon. Good luck.

00:55:34

Sam: Good luck.

00:55:50

Rob: New York Road Runners is a nonprofit organization with a vision to build healthier lives and stronger communities through the transformative power of running. The support of members and donors like you helps us achieve our mission to transform the health and well-being of our communities through inclusive and accessible running experiences, empowering all to achieve their potential. Learn more and contribute at nyrr.org/donate.