The Road to Recovery…
By Mark Lorenzoni

The single most important phase of a marathoner's training regimen is the post-race recovery period. And yet, ironically, it's by far the most abused phase by 26.2 milers. Sure, everyone's capable of taking it easy for the first few days after completing their marathon journey but it's the weeks and even months after the race that really count. Yet, sadly, this critically important phase is woefully neglected, and when folks rush back to their training, after recently completing a marathon, they often get injured.

In fact, post-marathon injuries are just as common, if not more, than injuries sustained during the training leading up to the race. So much of this has to do with improper recovery.

Most exercise physiologists agree that the post-race recovery period is not the *last* phase of your marathon training experience but actually the very *first* phase of your next training period. The more properly you execute your recovery the lower the risk of injury and the less likely you are to burn out prior to our next running event. Even if you don't plan on ever running another marathon, this time of recovery is critical in safely getting you totally back on your feet again. So here are a few tips in helping you have a successful post marathon recovery.

1. First off, let's back up a bit in the process and talk about race-day pacing, which has a whole lot to do with the recovery process. This may sound like a bit of riddle but the slower your time is (compared to what your original goal was) the longer the recovery is and the faster your time is (again, compared to your original goal) the quicker you recover. This is because the more you struggle and suffer over the last portion of your marathon (usually because of poor early mileage pacing execution or unusually high heat) the more damage you're doing to your body. And vice versa. The better you feel during the race (this usually occurs when you run the first section of your race slower than your targeted goal pace) the more efficient you are over the last few miles, therefore, the quicker you recover!

2. Immediately following the race, re-fuel your engine. In other words replenish all that has been depleted during your 26.2-mile journey. Most marathoners burn between two and three thousand calories during their event, not to mention all of those critical electrolytes, like sodium, that have been leached from your system. So, drink and eat up, not only in the hours but also the days immediately following your event.

3. Ice! I mean all over your body…your knees, achilles, feet, quads and any other place you feel you taxed during your race. This can greatly help to reduce post-race soreness due to inflammation. Do this for at least three days after the race.

4. Roll and stretch. Your fibers just love to tighten up after a long distance race, so the quicker and more aggressive you are about keeping them loose the less likely you are to feel sore or, worse yet, get injured.