



Full Marathon Advanced Training

Advanced running information and day-by-day training



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Introduction

Before you begin...

Congratulations, you're running the marathon and looking to improve. From beginning your specific marathon training, to lining up at the start and finishing; preparing for and running in the marathon is always an experience that you will never forget. This advanced training plan focuses on everything you need to get started, sensible precautions to take, and it also contains a week-by-week structured programme that will convert you into a fitter, healthier, successful marathon runner. However, before you don your trainers and start that first training session, take a little time out to check a few safety considerations.

Do you have the right training plan?

It could be dangerous to follow the advanced training plan if you are really a beginner or intermediate runner. If the following applies to you, you have the correct plan. However, if your current level of running training is less than the following, you may need the beginner or intermediate plan.

Current level of running training	Approximate expected finishing time band
You are already a runner	2h 45m – 3h 15m
You have been running for a year or more	
Your weekly long run is currently at least 15 miles	
You have competed in 10k and half marathon events	
You are currently comfortable with running approximately 40 miles per week	
You have already completed a marathon and are looking to improve your time	

Before you begin...

From beginning your training, to lining up at the start and finishing, preparing for and running in the marathon is a fantastic experience that you will never forget. This beginner's training plan focuses on everything you need to get started, sensible precautions to take and it also contains a week-by-week structured plan that will convert you from complete beginner to a fitter, healthier, successful marathon runner. However, before you start that first training session, take a little time out to check a few safety derations before you begin.

Safety First

To start with, it is vitally important to ensure that it is safe for you to begin an exercise programme. Complete the safety checklist below and if you answer YES to one or more questions, or alternatively, if you are at all concerned about starting training, then make an appointment with your doctor for a check-up before you start.



Health-status safety checklist:

1. Are you aged over 30 and/or have not exercised for some time? Y N
2. Do you suffer from any medical conditions? Y N
3. Are you a smoker or have recently given up smoking? Y N
4. Have you undergone any surgery in the past two years? Y N
5. Are you suffering from any injuries? Y N
6. Are you currently on any prescribed medication? Y N
7. Are you unsure about beginning an exercise programme? Y N

Once you have the all-clear from your doctor then you're ready to step out on the road to improved fitness.

The Marathon

The marathon is one of life's great challenges – and open to all! There are numerous marathon events all over the world and most international cities stage marathons. Whichever event you choose, stepping up to the challenge of training for and completing 26.2 miles is an incredible experience that you will never forget. Completing the marathon is a magnificent achievement wherever you finish in the field and this training plan steps you through to race day competitor and includes a multitude of tips and advice to help you reach your marathon goal.

Getting Started

Specialist gear

You're already a runner and have experience of training and racing. You will already own many items of kit but specific kit items can not only aid your training and racing comfort, they can also improve your performance. Your target is to knock time off your current marathon PB and choose the correct kit can help you run faster and more efficiently. The most important point is that you have suitable clothing (particularly footwear) and that you feel comfortable in everything. The most technical and most important kit you need to buy are your running shoes and to replace them regularly. You may want to consider racing shoes for the event, which are lighter, stripped down versions of conventional trainers.



Shoes

Correct footwear is one area where you should never compromise. Good running shoes are an investment in comfort, protection and injury prevention and it is worth visiting a specialist sports foot-wear retailer rather than a chain store and discussing your requirements with them. A specialist retailer with gait analysis and pressure plate testing will be able to assess your requirements and recommend suitable shoes for your particular gait and running style. If you decide on racing shoes, they usually have less cushioning and motion control systems than standard trainers, so discuss your plans with your retailer. Racing shoes can be 50% lighter than training shoes and can make a big difference to your race times. Studies estimate that a time gain of up to 10 seconds per mile can be achieved with lightweight shoes, potentially knocking almost 4 1/2 minutes off your PB.

Socks

Advanced, lightweight and foot-specific socks (left and right fitting socks) have a great benefit in that they hug the foot better and there is no excess sock floating around in the shoe which may cause blisters. Modern types have specially designed wicking areas to help keep your feet dryer, together with more cushioning at the heel and forefoot. In addition to racing flats, specialist socks can further enhance your race day performance.



Specialist gear

Shorts and tights

After socks come shorts, or when it is colder, tights. Shorts should be comfortable, lightweight and have the ability to wick away sweat when you train. Elastic-only shorts often move down a little, especially in wet conditions, so choose specific, lightweight shorts with both elastic and a draw-string waist.

When the weather is colder it is advisable to wear tights to keep your legs warmer and thus reduce the chance of injury. Fabric technology has exploded recently with the aid of new synthetic materials and NASA technology. This has aided running no end with high tech materials filtering down to basic running kit like tights and t-shirts. The running tights are available which hug the legs more efficiently and stop the wind and rain penetrating the leg itself. This helps in reducing injuries from cold muscles and also means that you can enjoy running when the weather is a little worse than ideal. Only diehard older runners now wear loose fitting cotton tights.

The fashionable and technological knowledgeable runners are choosing high tech garments that help them in their running. Your tights should be snug fitting and comfortable. It is important to try them on before you buy because many manufacturers have different cuts to suit different styles of runner. Generally the more expensive the tights, the more comfortable they will be and the better at keeping you cool in summer and warm in winter.



Running tops

Short and long-sleeve t-shirts have also benefited, like tights, from technological advances. The mid to top range t-shirts all wick away sweat to keep you cooler and allow a greater air circulation through the fabric. They feel very lightweight but have the properties to keep you warm or cool depending on when and how you wear them. Running t-shirts should be reasonably tight but not figure-hugging and likewise they shouldn't flap around when you run in them. It is a fine balance between well-fitted and slightly baggy that you should aim for. With long sleeve t-shirts, you should aim to get ones with cuffed sleeves so they stay down around your wrists. If there are no cuffs then the sleeves often ride up your arms when you run and this can be both annoying and cold.

Similarly, for hot weather training, modern vests are also designed with technological, wicking fabrics that also help air circulate around your body to aid cooling.



When the weather gets really cold or wet it is advisable to run in a gillet or a long-sleeve waterproof top. These offer excellent wind-stopping and rain-resistance capabilities and can keep you warm and dry throughout any run. Gillets are sleeveless jackets and ideal for quicker running in slightly warmer climates while full long-sleeve waterproofs are better for colder and wetter climates. The gilletts at the top end are very high tech and guaranteed waterproof and windproof. Cheaper versions will be fine for most running conditions but they will sacrifice certain aspects like being 100% waterproof or windproof. Being prepared for cooler conditions enables you to stay warm, dry and enjoy the run more. In warmer climates the new fabrics and technologies enable you to train harder by staying cooler and wicking away sweat and moisture from the body. Both of these mean you can't blame the weather for not training anymore and you can get and stay fitter all year round now in comfort and style.

What gear do I need?

Hats

Hats are similar to gloves in that woollen ones are the norm because they are easy to get hold of and cheap. The more high tech versions such as fleece offer wind stopping capabilities and some are waterproof as well. Caps offer greater protection from the rain, snow and sun but often they can get blown off in windy conditions. They don't offer the same warmth capabilities as woollen/high tech fabrics but they are good when you need better protection from the elements. In addition, they are better for runners who wear glasses because they help the glasses from getting rain or snow on.

Gloves

These should be lightweight and comfortable. Only in extreme weather will you need to wear thick running gloves (which even in the UK should be unlikely through the summer!) and more often than not you will heat up enough to be okay in the normal thin type. Woollen gloves are the norm because they are cheap to buy but they don't offer the same waterproof and wind stopper capabilities of the new high tech fabrics. Woollen gloves will be fine for most runners but if you are venturing out into colder or wetter climates, it is worth investing in a high tech pair. Running with cold hands can ruin the experience for you, so choose carefully when you buy, especially if it is near wintertime.



Sports bras

It is important to wear a sports bra that fits you snugly and gives adequate support for running. The bust is only held in place by the skin around it and the Coopers Ligaments and when the bust moves, these ligaments can stretch result in a permanent droop. In addition, this movement can be painful and leads many women to avoid certain activities that could be enjoyed with a good sports bra! Everyone is different and you may well need to try on a few different products before finding what is just right for you.

So does your sports bra fit?

- Your bra should fit snugly without being uncomfortably tight
- The bra should fit without any bulges around the sides
- The shoulder straps should not dig in (wider straps can be more comfortable)
- When you run there should be significantly less bounce than with a normal bra



There are many excellent bras on the market, which come in a large range of sizes and colours offering every different level of support.

Principles of training

It is common to think that when a training improvement is made, for example running further or running a faster time over a particular distance, that the improvement has been made at that specific time. In fact that is not the case, the improvement has been made some time previously, following an earlier training session. During the training session, it is the measurable results that are registered in the form of quicker times or further distances. This is because of the way the body responds to training. When exercising, the body is challenged. Following a training session, when the body is at rest, it adapts, gets stronger and improvements can be measured during a subsequent session. Hence the most important component of any training programme is rest, so that the body is able to adapt to training. Less is very often more in the long term and inadequate rest can result in excessive fatigue, loss of motivation and at worst, injury.

As an advanced runner, looking to improve on your existing race times, it is easy to think that the best training strategy is to continually increase both your mileage and training intensity. However, if you neglect rest from your training programme, you will never be able to perform at your optimum level and those elusive PB's may never be reached.

Structuring your sessions

Following correct exercise protocols is key to getting the most out of your training, so that you start out on the road to fitness with safe and correctly balanced training sessions. To get the most out of your training, you should adhere to the following sequence each time you train:

Warm Up

The warm up, raises the heart rate, gets blood flowing to the working muscles and prepares the body for exercise. It should be for a minimum of five minutes and replicate the movements or activities of the main session.

For example: when beginning a run, five minutes very easy jogging will prime the body for the main training session.

Mobility

Some basic actions to put the limbs through the range of movement that the main session requires will ensure that the joints are loosened up, lubricated and will function more efficiently.



Main session

This will form the bulk of the training session. For example: a brisk 30-minute run.

Cool down

The cool down should be at a lower intensity than the main session and should bring the body temperature and heart rate closer to pre-exercise levels. Waste by-products of exercise will be flushed from the muscles and tissues, accelerating recovery before the next training session.

For example: the cool-down should be a minimum of five to 10 minutes light CV. Jogging or walking is ideal.

Flexibility

Stretching exercises should be carried out after the main session and cool-down as the body is in a greater state of relaxation than at the beginning of the session. Five to 10 minutes spent stretching the muscles worked will maintain suppleness.

How to Stretch

To get the most out of your post exercise stretching session, simply follow the step-by-step guide below:

Relax

It is very important to be relaxed. Physical and mental tension will inhibit your range of movement and prevent your muscles from stretching as effectively. Hence, you will not achieve maximum flexibility benefits.

Ease into the stretch

Gradually move your body or the limb being stretched into the stretch position. Once you feel slight tension in the muscle, (known as the point of bind), which is the limit of the muscle's flexibility, hold the position. Avoid bouncing or any other movements, which could overstretch the muscle and result in injury.

Relax your breathing

Always keep your breathing easy and relaxed because that will reduce all-round muscular tension, which in turn will allow you to stretch further. Holding your breath will tense up your entire body, making stretching much harder.

Hold for 30 seconds

To get maximum stretching benefits, you need to hold the stretch for a minimum of 30 seconds. Stretching each muscle for just a few seconds brings no flexibility benefits.

Pain means no gain

Stretching should invoke a mild feeling of 'tightness' or tension within the stretched muscle. Pain when stretching indicates injury or a muscle that has been overstretched. Therefore, never stretch beyond a 'comfortable tightness'.

Rest and repeat

A single stretch for each muscle is very beneficial but if time permits, carry out two stretches for each muscle, separated by a short break of 30 seconds. The second stretch will help extend your range of movement further.

Frequency

Ideally stretch the major muscles after every run but if that proves too time-consuming, stretching twice a week is a suitable target.



Additional Training

Obviously running will form the core of all your training because you are training to condition your body to complete 26.2 miles under your own steam. However, it is also beneficial to incorporate other types of training in your programme, so that you get to the start line in the best possible shape.

Flexibility training

There are a multitude of flexibility exercises for stretching every muscle in the body. Primarily, you need to focus on leg stretches to keep your muscles long, supple and injury free. The key is to ensure that the muscles that have been utilised during your workout are stretched at the end of the training session.

For example: at the end of your run and cool down, spend a few minutes stretching the hamstrings, quadriceps, calves and adductors.



Cross-training

Cross-training is the name given to other forms of training that complement your running training. Cross-training can be extremely beneficial because it allows your body to recover from a run whilst still providing training benefits. Running is a very repetitive activity that if not carried out correctly, can lead to overuse injuries. By occasionally adding different activities to your programme, you keep fresh and significantly reduce any injury risk.

For example: the day after a long endurance training run, a light swimming session or bike ride will still provide cardiovascular benefits but without the same loading on muscles that have been fatigued from running.



Resistance training (weight training)

Resistance training is extremely beneficial to complement your running; strengthening all around the body and correcting any muscle imbalances. The range of resistance training exercises for training specific muscles is immense, and can enhance your running performance through improved posture and all-round strength.

Specific resistance training sessions are not included in this programme because as a new marathon runner it is important to focus as much as possible on building your endurance base for the challenge of running 26.2 miles. If you find that you have time to add in some resistance sessions to your training week, one to two workouts per week is ample.



Advanced Marathon Training Plan

Programme notes

This programme is a day-by-day 16-week schedule. The programme assumes:

- You are a regular runner
- You have been running for a year or more
- Your weekly long run is currently at least 15 miles
- You have competed in 10k and half marathon events
- You are currently comfortable with running approximately 40 miles per week
- You have already completed a marathon and are looking to improve your time

For each session in the programme, follow the protocols for warm-up, mobility, main session, cool-down and flexibility outlined earlier. Start at week one but if your training is slightly ahead, you can jump in at a later week. Simply check the week-by-week chart to see which week matches your current activity levels and then start at that point.

There is flexibility within the programme for switching training sessions around during the week to fit in with your other commitments such as work, home, family etc. The key point is to ensure that your training is balanced each week, including flexibility, CV and rest.

Insight

Don't be a slave to the plan! The training programme is designed with rest days, recovery sessions and lower volume weeks. This will ensure your body has time to adapt to the training. However, everyone is different and if you feel that an extra day's rest will be beneficial to your training, simply take out one of the shorter sessions in that week.

If you find it difficult to complete some weeks due to lack of time, always try to complete the long run and quality sessions. The most important factor with training for the marathon is to build endurance, followed by speed endurance, so try to complete all the long runs and interval/fartlek/hill sessions.

Avoid over-reaching and extending all your training runs in an attempt to improve faster. If you wish to run more miles, choose the optional extra morning/lunchtime runs described for each week but keep them easy and relaxed.

Terminology

The programme will frequently refer to the term 'fartlek'. Fartlek is a Swedish word that means speed-play. A fartlek session is an unstructured, quality training session, where instead of running at a uniform pace, you vary the pace throughout the run, depending on how you feel. For example, a 7-mile fartlek session could be:

- Warm-up for 1 mile
- Run hard for 1 mile
- Easy jog recovery for 1/2 mile
- Alternately sprint and jog for 1/2 mile
- Steady running for 1 mile
- Race pace for 2 miles
- 1 mile cool-down

The key thing with a fartlek session is that you simply run as you feel, backing off when you start to tire, speeding up if and when you want to and for as long as you like. choose the optional extra morning/lunchtime runs described for each week but keep them easy and relaxed.

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Week No. 1	The start		
Day	Training	Training notes	Mileage
Optional	2 early morning runs totalling 10 miles		0-10
Mon	6 miles steady		6
Tues	3 x 1 mile (2 mins recovery between miles), + warm-up and cool-down	Programme will typically contain two quality sessions per week	5
Wed	Resistance training session	All-over body programme, including core	
Thurs	5 miles easy	Recovery from Tues and Wed	5
Fri	6 x 800m (1 minute recovery) + good warm-up and cool-down		5
Sat	5 miles brisk		5
Sun	17 miles taken very easily		17
Total weekly mileage			43-53

Week No. 2	First race		
Day	Training	Training notes	Mileage
Optional	2 early morning runs totalling 10 miles		0-10
Mon	Easy 5 miles		5
Tues	2 x 2 miles (4 minutes recovery) + warm-up and cool-down		6
Wed	Resistance training as per week 1		
Thurs	Steady 6-7 miles		6-7
Fri	8 miles hilly fartlek		8
Sat	5 miles easy		5
Sun	10k race + good warm-up and cool-down	Maximum effort, record time	9
Total weekly mileage			39-50

Week No. 3	Building long runs		
Day	Training	Training notes	Mileage
Optional	2 early morning runs totalling 10 miles		0-10
Mon	6 miles, starting slowly		6
Tues	Mile repetition session as per week 1	Look to improve times	5
Wed	10 miles steady		10
Thurs	Resistance training session		
Fri	6 x 800m (1 minute recovery) + good warm-up and cool-down		5
Sat	Rest		
Sun	18 miles steady	Start easily	18
Total weekly mileage			44-54

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Week No. 4	Endurance race week		
Day	Training	Training notes	Mileage
Optional	2 early morning runs totalling 10 miles		0-10
Mon	5 miles recovery run		5
Tues	8 x 1000m (2 mins recovery between each) + warm-up and cool-down		7
Wed	Resistance training session		
Thurs	10 miles steady, off-road if possible		10
Fri	6 x 1 mins with equal distance jog recoveries + warm-up and cool-down		5
Sat	3 miles easy jog		3
Sun	Half marathon race or equivalent time-trial + warm-up and cool-down	Full effort, record time	15
Total weekly mileage			45-55

Week No. 5	Long run hits 20 miles		
Day	Training	Training notes	Mileage
Optional	2 early morning runs totalling 10 miles		0-10
Mon	Easy swimming or cycling for 35 mins	Try and get a massage if possible	
Tues	Steady 6 miles		6
Wed	Resistance training + easy 3 mile jog afterwards		3
Thurs	10 miles even pace run	Slower than marathon pace	10
Fri	4 x 1 mile (2 minute recoveries) + warm-up and cool-down		6
Sat	4 miles easy		4
Sun	20 miles steady pace	Start easily	20
Total weekly mileage			49-59

Week No. 6			
Day	Training	Training notes	Mileage
Optional	2 early morning runs totalling 10 miles		0-10
Mon	Rest		
Tues	Hill session. 8 x long hill repetitions (3 mins each approx) + warm-up and cool-down		6
Wed	Steady 6 miles		6
Thurs	Off-road fartlek	Go as you please	9
Fri	6 x 1 minute with equal distance jog recoveries + warm-up and cool-down		5
Sat	5 miles easy		5
Sun	10 mile time-trial + warm-up and cool-down		12
Total weekly mileage			43-53

Advanced Marathon Training Plan

Week No. 7			
Day	Training	Training notes	Mileage
Optional	2 early morning runs totalling 10 miles		0-10
Mon	Steady 6 miles		6
Tues	3 x 2 miles (3 minutes recovery) + warm-up and cool-down		8
Wed	4 miles relaxed run		4
Thurs	Resistance training session		
Fri	Brisk 8 miles		8
Sat	Rest		
Sun	21 miles slow		21
Total weekly mileage			47-57

Week No. 8 Mini taper & half marathon race			
Day	Training	Training notes	Mileage
Mon	4 miles easy jog, ideally off-road		4
Tues	7 miles fartlek		7
Wed	Resistance training session		
Thurs	6 miles steady		6
Fri	Rest		
Sat	2 miles easy jog		2
Sun	Half marathon race + warm-up and cool-down	Look to beat week 4 time	15
Total weekly mileage			34

Week No. 9 Building up again			
Day	Training	Training notes	Mileage
Optional	3 easy early morning or lunchtime runs totalling 15 miles		0-15
Mon	Easy swim or cycle for 30 minutes		
Tues	Resistance training session		
Wed	4 x 1 mile (2 minute recoveries) + warm-up and cool-down		6
Thurs	10 miles steady pace		10
Fri	8 miles fartlek with 3 minute efforts throughout		8
Sat	5 miles light		5
Sun	22 miles steady pace		22
Total weekly mileage			51-66

Advanced Marathon Training Plan

Week No. 10	Building up again		
Day	Training	Training notes	Mileage
Optional	3 easy early morning or lunchtime runs totalling 15 miles		0-15
Mon	5 miles easy		5
Tues	8 x 800m (1 minute recoveries) + warm-up and cool-down		6
Wed	12 miles steady	Ideally off-road	12
Thurs	Resistance training session		
Fri	8 x 1 minute with equal distance jog recoveries + warm-up and cool-down		6
Sat	5 miles easy		5
Sun	15 mile fast pace run	Run as a time-trial	15
Total weekly mileage			49-64

Week No. 11			
Day	Training	Training notes	Mileage
Optional	3 easy early morning or lunchtime runs totalling 15 miles		0-15
Mon	6 miles relaxed, ideally off-road		6
Tues	10 miles, including 8 x 2 minute hill efforts		10
Wed	Resistance training session		
Thurs	Steady 6 miles		6
Fri	7 miles starting slowly, building to half marathon race pace		7
Sat	Rest		
Sun	24 miles easy pace	Start slowly	24
Total weekly mileage			53-68

Week No. 12	Mini taper and 10k race		
Day	Training	Training notes	Mileage
Optional	2 easy early morning or lunchtime runs totalling 10 miles		0-10
Mon	5 miles easy off-road run		5
Tues	4 x 1 mile (2 minute recoveries) + warm-up and cool-down		6
Wed	14 miles steady run		14
Thurs	Resistance training session		
Fri	6 miles fartlek		6
Sat	Easy 4 miles jog		4
Sun	10k race + good warm-up and cool-down	Look to improve on week 2 time	9
Total weekly mileage			44-54

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Week No. 13	Peak mileage week		
Day	Training	Training notes	Mileage
Optional	3 easy early morning or lunchtime runs totalling 15 miles		0-15
Mon	Steady 6 miles		6
Tues	5 x 1 mile (2 minute recoveries) + warm-up and cool-down		7
Wed	Resistance training session		
Thurs	12 miles steady run		12
Fri	8 x 1 minute with equal distance jog recoveries + warm-up and cool-down		6
Sat	Rest		
Sun	24 miles at close to marathon pace	Last long run	24
Total weekly mileage			55-70

Week No. 14	Start of race taper		
Day	Training	Training notes	Mileage
Optional	2 easy early morning or lunchtime runs totalling 10 miles		0-10
Mon	Swim or cycle for 30 minutes		
Tues	8 miles including 8 x 3 minutes fast		8
Wed	Steady 8 miles at marathon pace		8
Thurs	Resistance training session	Last gym workout	
Fri	Rest or easy 3 mile jog		0-3
Sat	4 miles easy jog		4
Sun	15 miles steady, slightly slower than marathon pace		15
Total weekly mileage			35-48

Week No. 15	Further tapering		
Day	Training	Training notes	Mileage
Optional	1 easy early morning or lunchtime run totalling 5 miles		0-5
Mon	5 miles easy off-road		5
Tues	6 miles easy with 5 x 1 minute bursts		6
Wed	7 miles brisk pace	Not flat out	7
Thurs	4 x 1 minute with equal distance jog recoveries + warm-up and cooldown	Not flat out	4
Fri	Rest		
Sat	2 miles easy jog		2
Sun	10 miles slower than marathon race pace	Wear race kit and shoes	10
Total weekly mileage			34-39

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Week No. 16	Final taper and preparation week			
Day	Training	Training notes	Mileage	
Mon	Rest	Try to get a leg massage early this week		
Tues	1 mile warm-up, 1 mile at marathon pace, 1 mile cool-down		3	
Wed	Steady 4 miles		4	
Thurs	Easy 4 miles with 6 x 20 second bursts		4	
Fri	Rest			
Sat	2 miles easy jog		2	
Sun	Race Day!	THE RACE!	26.2	
			Total weekly mileage	39.2

Conclusion

Well done!

You have come to the end of the 16-week schedule, and your speed, strength, endurance and speed endurance has advanced. You should be feeling considerably fitter and feel yourself moving up. Along the way, you have made significant health and fitness gains, and equally importantly, you have progressed safely. As well as your race goals, by maintaining your training, you will be making a major contribution to your long-term health and fitness and this advanced schedule can also serve as a foundation and springboard to increase your fitness levels further.



Statistics show that most runners can continue to improve and progress for at least seven years after they first take up the sport. Now you've advanced and have improved, after a race recovery period, evaluate your training and racing strengths and weaknesses before you launch into your next racing challenge. That way you can map out a structured plan that could see you advance further in your next competition.

Disclaimer

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