

Strategies and Tactics on Running the 400 Meters

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Here are a few tips to try to get your 400 meter times lower. Most people look at the training involved which is extremely important, but very few consider tactical race strategies.

Let's say that you want to run 47.0. Two even 200 meter "splits" would be 23.5 & 23.5. However, if you ran your first 200 meters in 23.5 it is doubtful that you can come back with an equal or lower split. Most top 400 meter runners usually run the first 200 slightly faster than the second 200. Looking at this theory, perhaps you should try to run the first 200 in 23.0 and then try to bring the second 200 home at 24.0. Now let's further divide the race. To run 23.0 for 200 meters you would have to be at least at 11.5 for the first 100 meters.

Let's look at the race tactics. Go out strong and try to come through the first 100 meters in at least 11.5. Use the "exchange and/or fly" zone for the 4 X 100 to think about accelerating around the second turn. You should concentrate on accelerating for about 20 meters. These strategies will "slingshot" you into the back stretch. The tactic of going out strong and then accelerating through the exchange zone for the "slingshot" effect has to be worked on in practice by doing a lot of 110 to 120 meter sprints around the first two turns of the track. Once you have given yourself that "slingshot" into the back stretch you want to concentrate on staying relaxed and sprinting within yourself. Do not slow down - if you get into a solid running tempo on the back stretch you should be able to maintain your speed. Hopefully, at the 200 meter mark you will be somewhere close to 23 seconds. Again, this has to be worked on by running 200 meters in practice at the pace you are trying to go in the race.

I have always found that it is important for the athlete to concentrate on one specific technical movement going into the third 100 meters of the race, Perhaps you should concentrate on keeping your arms moving, keeping a correct posture, or another single thought that keeps your mind in the race.

The last 100 meters you want to maintain your concentration and bring it home! Concentrate on trying to go faster and not on how tired you may be. I hope this helps. As stated before - all phases of the race need to be practiced.